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of Ontario



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(Hansard)**

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21 September 2017

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Jeudi
21 septembre 2017

Speaker: Honourable Dave Levac
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Président : L'honorable Dave Levac
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 21 September 2017

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 21 septembre 2017

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning.
Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

REPRESENTATION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA PRÉSENTATION ÉLECTORALE

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 20, 2017, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 152, An Act to amend the Representation Act, 2015 and certain other Acts / Projet de loi 152, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2015 sur la représentation électorale et d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's a pleasure indeed to speak to Bill 152 today. Many people in the House will remember that last week I spoke to a bill, the Construction Lien Amendment Act, where I extolled some applause and appreciation to the government on how to effectively develop, promote and enact public policy. There will be no such accolades or applause or appreciation today with Bill 152.

Let me first start off by saying that although the title of this bill is the Representation Statute Law Amendment Act and deals with the Far North boundary redistribution, there's another element, and that is the election financing reforms that are also incorporated into the bill. Everybody in the House will remember: Last year we spent a great deal of time with Bill 201 and Bill 45 to end the cash-for-access shenanigans that were going on with the present government and the Liberal Party. What we see now in Bill 152 is that the cash-for-access shenanigans are going to continue with this amendment for Far North boundary changes, which now opens up the doors for more Liberal government pay-to-play schemes.

I find it atrocious that they would put this amendment to the Election Finances Act into this bill. Just for clarity, the default condition under our Election Finances Act now is that members of the Legislature or candidates are prevented from attending fundraising events. That's the default position. That's the way this House voted last

year. There is one change in this act. It's in section 23.1 of the Election Finances Act in subsection (2.1). Nothing in this subsection prevents a person mentioned—that's MPPs and candidates—in that subsection from attending an annual general meeting, policy conference or similar meeting for members held by a registered political party or a registered constituency association, where a charge for attendance includes a contribution portion. So as long as the contribution is embedded within the fee, pay-to-play is back here in Ontario. Pay-to-play is back here and cash-for-access is back here.

Look at the broad latitude they've provided—or hidden under; I'm not sure. An annual general meeting, a policy conference or similar meeting: Well, what kind of meeting would be similar as long as it has an embedded contribution into the fee? Clearly, as we can see, the maximum contribution is \$1,200. They can have a \$50 cost-recovery fee for their policy conference or similar meeting, and then they can have another \$1,150 in an embedded contribution and it would now be lawful. I would like somebody on the government side to explain why they are so determined to get back into the cash-for-access.

I did want to also state, Speaker, that I will be sharing my time with the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka and the member from North Bay.

That's the election financing aspect. There are some other errors in it, but it goes back to what I was saying last week. If a government actually took its time and spent the time listening to people, listening to the opposition, listening at committee hearings—we actually can develop good public policy when there is an attempt or interest to listen. This government has taken no such attempts, has provided no indication that they are interested. Bill 152 is proceeding very much along the lines of political self-interest.

That's one element on the election financing. I also want to speak to the far north boundaries act, the change in the riding boundaries. I think it is important to state on the record a few of my thoughts on this. First off, they created an expert panel, but instead of charging the expert panel with examining and evaluating a problem, they charged the expert panel with a solution. It's right in the act that created the expert panel that you will create at least one and possibly two new ridings to address a problem that they say is not effective representation for the north.

Speaker, I find that somewhat an affront to my colleagues in the third party because it is their members who represent those areas. It is two members of the third party

who represent those areas: Mr. Bisson from Timmins–James Bay and Sarah from Kenora–Rainy River.

This government said those people are not getting effective representation and we need to do something about it. I have to say, as I look across—

Interjection.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I would say to the members in the third party: I would take significant exception to that statement. I know the members. I don't believe for a moment that they should be tarnished in such a manner.

0910

But let's contrast what the Liberal government has said about effective representation in the north with their own actions. I believe that the member from Toronto Centre stepped down this summer. That riding will not have any representation for 10 months. What is the government doing about that? Well, it's unimportant to have a member in the Legislature representing an area if it's a Liberal member. Maybe it doesn't make any difference if the Liberal member is here or not.

Speaker, I know it's not parliamentary to name names so I won't, but I think everybody in this House will recognize that there have been a lot of Toronto Centres happening in the Liberal benches in the last year. There have been a number of members, for various reasons, that we have not seen here for quite an extended period of time, and they're all Liberal members. I would say: Is there not a level of insincerity when the government says, "There's not effective representation in the north and we must do something about it," but when there is no representation in their own ridings, they choose to do nothing? I think the contradictions are striking. I think the contradictions are profound. I think it exposes this government's lack of interest in actually representing people and its significant, profound self-interest in keeping power and retaining power and doing anything—anything—to retain that power.

Let me talk about some of the things about this ineffective representation that the Liberals have charged the members of the third party with.

What is really important is the lack of services in northern Ontario, the lack of government attending to their obligations in northern Ontario. For over 10 years in Kenora–Rainy River we have not had a crown attorney—over 10 years. People have asked and requested that they have a crown attorney so that they can indeed have access to justice. They hired one crown attorney after 10 years, and that person promptly resigned a few months later, and still no crown attorney.

Let's think about the Ring of Fire. For years and years, this government has said that the Ring of Fire is important to the north. It said that it is critical to Ontario. I believe that the first time I heard the government state that was in the throne speech back in 2008. All these years later, there is still no road to the Ring of Fire; there still is no transportation to the Ring of Fire. To this day, the minerals stay in the ground: no employment, no prosperity, no opportunity. Is that because of a lack of, or ineffective, representation? Let's measure, Speaker.

Through all those years, every Liberal-held riding in the north contained a member of cabinet, a member of the executive. As they thumped their chest and promoted their undying love and sympathy for the north, all those cabinet ministers from the north did nothing for the Ring of Fire, did nothing for northern Ontario. Is it indeed a matter of ineffective representation by the members of the third party that has prevented northern Ontario from succeeding? I think not.

The failure of this government and their northern ministers is indeed profound, real and ongoing. It's not just the Ring of Fire. It's not just the lack of crown attorneys. How about the decades-long problem of not having safe and clean drinking water in our northern reserves? Decades. I have heard the previous minister of environment, who is not here and who no longer has any representation in Toronto Centre, talk about the problems of drinking water, but never have we seen a solution offered or a solution implemented.

It is not ineffective representation or under-representation; it is because this government just doesn't care. If they did care about the north, they would do something. They've had many, many years to do so. And they've had a very significant number of northern members in the executive, but they have either not had a voice or their voice has been excluded and dismissed.

The problems in health care delivery and services in the north are legendary. I believe the member here from Nickel Belt has spoken often in the House about the failings of health care in the north. I have not heard those comments from the Liberal side. I have not heard any interest explored. I've heard it from the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. I've heard it from the member from North Bay. I've heard it from this caucus and that caucus, but I have yet to hear it from the Liberal side of this House. Is it a lack of effective representation, or is it no interest by the Liberal members?

I think the people of northern Ontario will see through this facade of Bill 152. They'll see clearly that this is not meant to improve the influence of northern Ontario in this chamber; it's meant to pacify, appease and make it appear that something is being done when nothing is being done. The only way we are going to have the people in the north having influence is when this caucus is sitting over there and when northern Ontario will be taken into appropriate—

Laughter.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I know the member from Barrie is laughing. She's laughing and heckling, the member from Barrie over there, as I talk about the Ring of Fire, as I talk about the drinking water—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Order.

Mr. Randy Hillier: —as I talk about the lack of representation—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay. I have called "order" a couple of times. The next time I get up, someone will be warned. It's never too early. It's only 20 after 9.

I'm going to return to the member to return to the debate.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker.

The poor administration and the lack of services in the north are legendary. What about the Northland? I think we had a member in cabinet from Sudbury at the time. We had a member in cabinet from Sault Ste. Marie, a member in cabinet from—let's see, where else? Oh, Thunder Bay—Atikokan—anyway, I may make an error so I'll not try to go down—the purpose here, though, is lots of cabinet representation from the north. And what happened to the Northland? What happened to transportation for the public in northern Ontario from this government? It's not on the subway at Kirby so it's not that important for the minister to get too involved in helping and assisting transportation; indeed, far from it. We can see where their interest is. Where they push the envelope of ministerial involvement and management is when it may cost them a seat, or in the attempts to improve electoral outcomes.

0920

I just want to go back to this contrast between the Construction Lien Act and this act, and, again, how I stood in this House and applauded the government for doing the right thing with the Construction Lien Act. It took a lot of time but they did engage. They engaged an expert panel, but instead of telling the expert panel what the solution was, they said, "Examine the problem and evaluate options to resolve." That's what I think normal people do when they are faced with a problem: Examine the problem and evaluate options.

What do we do with Bill 152? We state a problem, not in sincere terms, that there is ineffective representation in the north and that it must be addressed. Then the government also charges the expert panel, "You will create one or two new ridings." Isn't that astonishing? They don't quantify what the problem is for the expert panel. They don't ask the expert panel to measure or quantify or put the problem in objective manners. They just say, "Here's the solution."

As I said, there are lots of solutions in the north. Let the people of the north actually have some influence in this chamber, because it's not just the people of the north who feel disenfranchised. It's people from rural, remote and northern Ontario who don't feel their interests are being attended to by this government. And I have to say, they're justified in feeling that. I have seen it here myself; we've all seen it. This government knows where it can win an election, and it doesn't need rural, remote or northern Ontario to win an election, unfortunately.

I would like to see this chamber, this Legislative Assembly, actually demonstrate to the people of northern Ontario and rural Ontario that their voices and interests and concerns do matter; that they do matter and we take those interests deeply and respectfully and act on them. Maybe we ought to have an expert panel, a true expert panel, look at this and say, "Let's examine the problem. Why are people in northern Ontario and rural Ontario disenfranchised? Why do they not have improved influ-

ence in this chamber?" And charge that expert panel with actually proposing and evaluating different options.

I think northern Ontario should have some level of a referendum mechanism, for example, that when this august chamber determines to come up with a policy that is beneficial to the densely populated metropolitan areas of this province but has profound negative consequences for the north, I think the people of the north ought to be consulted and they ought to be able to trigger a mechanism to prevent those negative policies from being imposed from so far away. There's just one example. I am sure there are many people that could come up with far more interesting options to improve the influence of the people of the north in this province.

I do hope—I don't know if my hope is misplaced; I don't know if my optimism is misplaced. This bill will go to committee. Even if I don't have optimism, I do expect this government to actually listen to the people from northern Ontario during these committee hearings and actually start doing something for the north. That would be far more profound. That would be far more effective.

I'm going to end off with this one element; I've got a couple of minutes left before I share with the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka. That is, we essentially have tried to mirror our riding boundaries in this province with the federal government, with the House of Commons, and I think there is benefit in having those ridings mirrored. I think it provides greater clarity for constituents, less confusion for constituents, that they can see, visualize and actually meet with representatives from the same area that have provincial or federal jurisdictions.

We broke with that, we deviated from that policy, a decade ago and provided one additional riding in northern Ontario. Now we're deviating quite a bit more. There may be some significant advantages, but there may be some disadvantages.

It's been brought up by a number of people on this bill because of the substantial deviation from the norm on our electoral ridings as well. I think this is important to state for the record and for the members on the other side to consider: Our baseline criteria for establishing an electoral district in this province is a population of approximately 100,000 people and that is also a community of interest. Those are the two essential criteria. A riding association is, in law and by convention, expected to meet that. Now, of course, you can't slice and dice up things neatly all the time, so we allow for a deviation. We allow for a deviation of plus or minus 25% from that 100,000. And every 10 years, when the census comes out, we realign those borders for that 100,000 population.

The Supreme Court has recognized, because of the diversity of this country and the large expanses in geography and the remoteness, that you may deviate by more than 25% in specific examples where there's a large expanse of territory and few people. And the Supreme Court has gone on and given guidance of up to 50% of that deviation, so 100,000 plus or minus 50%.

Well, the government is pushing the envelope here, because a number of these ridings—all of these ridings—go beyond the 50% deviation into the 70% deviation.

0930

I would put that on the record, because the corresponding or the flipside of that equation is this: Our Constitution and our Supreme Court recognize that in a representative democracy, there ought to be and there must be voter parity, that a vote in Lanark ought not to be worth more or less than a vote in Toronto. It's a sound principle. I think it's a good principle. We also know that with every sound principle, with every sound rule, there will be exceptions to the rule. Is the government pushing the envelope on the exception to the rule with this? I'll leave that for consideration and for debate. But a 70% deviation is substantial.

I guess I should just take a step back in historical time period. One of the great periods of time and one of the great periods of parliamentary democracy was when, back in England, in the UK, they went to that convention of voter parity, communities of interest, and they got rid of what was then called the rotten boroughs. Rotten boroughs was gerrymandering by politicians to create ridings that were safe for them, not so much in the interest of effective representation, I believe, but in the interest of electoral success.

This gerrymandering brought the Westminster democracy into a level of significant disrepute. The members of the Commons at the time said, "We're tarnishing ourselves with our race to the trough." They said, "We'd best stand up and actually do something that is in the interests of the people," and they brought in a bill to remove the rotten boroughs.

I fear that not everybody on the other side of the aisle has the same adherence to those principles that were demonstrated so long ago in Westminster.

I'll leave that with you in the House to consider. I look forward to hearing from my colleagues from Parry Sound–Muskoka and North Bay.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It is wonderful to be able to stand and speak about our beloved north. I was born and raised in the north, lived there 61 years. As a former mayor of North Bay, I can tell you that this is so very important because, as I've seen over the years, many people in this place—and I say this respectfully—really do not understand the North.

How on earth would a bill called the Far North Act have ever been passed by this government if they understood the north? They never communicated with any of the leaders in the north, any of the First Nations in the north. Nobody was consulted when they developed the Far North Act. That, by the way, cut off development of mining and lumber. Over half of the north cut off: That's what happens when you don't understand the North.

You also come up with a bill called the safe communities act—the Strong Communities Act. It's a great name, by the way. It sounds powerful: the Strong Communities Act. We had just built a multi-million-dollar tri-government industrial park. The feds, the province, the city, we

put millions and millions into an industrial park in North Bay.

In the north, Speaker, if you travel and you fly over and look down, you're going to see one of two things. You're going to see either rock or swamp. I'll use the polite word—

Mr. Norm Miller: Lakes, too.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Lakes—lots of lakes. You're going to see wetlands. We know how to handle our wetlands in the north. We treasure them, we cherish them and we know the importance of them. Our industrial park is built in a wetland; it was a wetland. You don't have a choice when you look for a flat piece of land. The feds, the province and the municipality spent tens of millions of dollars building this. The Strong Communities Act came down and it disallowed any development on a wetland.

I understand why you need that in the GTA; I can understand. They have filled in their wetlands here and not done it properly for decades. But in the north, we respect them. We've always had arrangements, with the approval of the provincial government, to take any wetland we build on and create an equal piece of wetland somewhere else. That's what we do in the north. We know how to manage our resources. We know how to be the good stewards.

So you want to build on a wetland? We built Laurier Woods. We built parking lots, signage, fencing and boardwalks on this beautiful piece of wetland, where you can bring your family and come and enjoy a day. There's all kinds of signage that explains everything to you. Every time we built in our industrial park, we added on to Laurier Woods. It's hundreds of acres. It's right in the middle of the city. It's spectacular, and it's a model for others to follow.

With the Strong Communities Act, you can no longer build on a wetland. Well, our industrial park is a wetland, so we can no longer sell any of those pieces of property. It's tens of millions of dollars that the province, the feds and the city spent. It's sewer, water, high-speed Internet, roads—all through a wetland, all empty. It can't be built on. That's the misunderstanding that this government has of northern Ontario. We were always allowed to do that in the past. So now you've got this high-speed Internet to nowhere. You've got streets that you can't develop on. It's because they misunderstand the north.

So I am thrilled, and I encourage you to visit Kiiwetinoong or Mushkegowuk, these new ridings that are being created.

Speaker, I'm going to veer off here, and I'm just going to give you a little bit of a day in your life and what northern Ontario has to do with this.

Think about this: You get up in the morning and you brush your teeth; you're using toothpaste. You may have had a rough day, or plan on coming in to Queen's Park, and you're anticipating the day, so you take an Aspirin. You leave the bathroom and flick the light switch, and you touch the light-switch cover. You are making your lunch, and you put shredded cheese in it. You'll hear

what this has to do with the north in a moment, Speaker. You wrap that lunch in cellophane. You put on a rayon shirt or a rayon blouse or rayon clothing. You look around your place, and you notice how beautiful the place looks. There's paint on the walls. You're preparing your papers for question period, and you put a paper clip on your papers. You get into your vehicle, and you know that you're safe because you have an airbag.

Speaker, what on earth does all that have to do with northern Ontario? Well, let me tell you: All of those things I mentioned use cellulose from wood pulp—wood chips. This is all due to forestry. Your toothpaste, your Aspirin, the melamine that's in the light-switch cover, the cellulose gum that stops your shredded cheese from sticking, the paint on the walls, the paper clip that won't rust, and the airbag that has a detonator, an explosive—all of those things are made from cellulose, from wood chips that you get in northern Ontario.

So I would encourage the members to come and visit the north and get a better understanding of the north.

The problem with creating Kiiwetinoong and Mushkegowuk, of course, is that here in the Legislature, it's very difficult for MPPs—I don't mean it's physically difficult for them to get to the north, but it's practically difficult. It doesn't fit our rules and our guidelines. You can't get to many of these places by a scheduled air service. You need to have a charter air service to get to many, many of the places in the Far North. But it doesn't fit the guidelines.

So I ask this government, when the bill actually goes into committee and we talk about amendments, to have a serious look at our own requirements for our fellow MPPs to ever, ever get to any of these places. In many cases, you simply can't get there from here on scheduled air service. We need to make these accommodations and make these allowances for members to be able to charter.

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That's a little guideline of why, in some things, the Far North Act has destroyed any opportunity for half of northern Ontario. I tell you, Speaker, it's a good job that the Far North Act never got enacted a little bit earlier; we never would have discovered the Ring of Fire that the earlier member spoke about.

The other aspect of this bill that I want to speak about—and I shouldn't have to; it shouldn't be in this bill—is the Election Finances Act. Imagine you've got a bill that is creating two new ridings in northern Ontario—this is an historic opportunity to talk about the north—and they slip in election finances.

It's like a big "oops." They bungled the first round so badly, because they got caught in an election finance scandal, that they jammed through this Election Finances Act to cover over and try to correct all the rules they were breaking. They threw it together so hastily and realized—mostly without speaking to Elections Ontario, I might add. They have bungled it so badly that they now need to try to figure out a way to fix this mess they put themselves and all MPPs in, so they've come up with Election Finances Act changes. Instead of hitting that

head-on and saying, "We're sorry we bungled it so badly; we need to bring this back and talk about it," they bury it in part of the northern ridings bill. I truly cannot believe that. I find it insulting, first of all, that they made those changes and are trying to slip them through here, and that they are burying them in a bill that should be all about the north—we can't even have that.

I would encourage very much that the members come up and visit Kiiwetinoong and Mushkegowuk. You'll learn about forestry; you'll learn about mining; you'll learn about the things that not many on that side of the House actually know about. It will be an opportunity to shine a light on northern Ontario. I know that when I stand in this Legislature, and the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, and the member from Sault Ste. Marie now, our three northern members here—we try to weave northern conversations into just about everything we do.

That's why, when I talk about any bill—it doesn't matter that it is this northern bill—you will always hear me talking about Mattawa or Trout Creek or Chisholm or any of the communities. It's so different. When you're here in the GTHA and you've got 20, 30 or 40 MPPs who share one mayor—20 MPPs certainly share one mayor. In the north, it's so different. I serve 11 mayors: the mayor of the city of North Bay and 10 rural mayors. In fact, this summer, not long ago, I had the rural mayors over to my home. It was an historic day where we all got together and had an opportunity to talk exclusively about the north. When they send council resolutions down to me here in Toronto, I read them. They say, "Thank you for reading. You're shining a light on northern Ontario," and certainly on the differences in northern Ontario and the members who are here in the south.

Speaker, it's a great opportunity to have spoken about my beloved riding of Nipissing and our beautiful north and the Far North. I invite everybody: Figure out how you can get up there, and come and visit in Kiiwetinoong and Mushkegowuk. You will be enlightened by what you're going to see.

I thank you for this opportunity, Speaker. I'll turn it over to the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 152, the Representation Statute Law Amendment Act, 2017. Before I begin, I do want to apologize in case I mispronounce the new riding names. This bill creates two additional ridings in northern Ontario, splitting what is now Kenora–Rainy River into Kenora–Rainy River and Kiiwetinoong and dividing what is now Timmins–James Bay into Timmins and Mushkegowuk.

The proposed new riding of Kenora–Rainy River will obviously include Kenora and Rainy River as well as Dryden, Fort Frances, Vermilion Bay and many other small communities. It will have a population of 53,027.

Kiiwetinoong will consist of the rest of the current riding of Kenora–Rainy River, minus Weenusk, a Cree-speaking First Nation which has more shared heritage

with the First Nations of Mushkegowuk. This proposed riding will include Red Lake, which is one of the world's most prolific gold districts, and Fort Severn, Ontario's most northerly community. I visited Fort Severn a number of years ago with then-PC leader John Tory and Stan Beardy, the NAN Grand Chief.

Timmins will be simply the city of Timmins. Mushkegowuk will include the rest of the current riding of Timmins–James Bay, including Hearst, Kapuskasing, Moose Factory, Kashechewan and Attawapiskat.

We do support his redistribution. However, I do hope that the government has considered the constitutionality of this legislation, given that the proposed riding of Mushkegowuk will have a population of 30,037 people. That being said, we do support this redistribution because we recognize the unique challenges of representing the current ridings of Timmins–James Bay and Kenora–Rainy River, huge swaths of which have no roads and face huge challenges.

Whether it's the endless boil-water advisories, the high level of addiction or the high suicide rates, we can see that these communities need more attention. We support this because this government is right about one thing: The people in northern Ontario feel like they don't have a voice in government. This is not a comment on the current members for Timmins–James Bay or Kenora–Rainy River; it is, however, a comment about the current government.

This government makes decisions about issues that impact the north without considering what those impacts will be. The Far North Act, which was talked about by the member from Nipissing, is the biggest example of this. The Endangered Species Act is becoming another example.

When this government first introduced the ESA, they had an advocate for northern Ontario and the former member for Timiskaming–Cochrane, the Minister of Natural Resources. When then-Minister Ramsay introduced this legislation, he listened to northerners and to the forestry industry, which employs so many northerners. He committed that the ESA would not apply to the forestry sector, because forestry companies were already regulated under the Crown Forest Sustainability Act and doing a great job. The CFSAs does protect endangered species.

Unfortunately, Minister Ramsay's commitment was quickly forgotten by this Liberal government. Thankfully, the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry seems to recently have started to listen and has committed to delay the species-at-risk guide for 28 species. The minister had come under criticism for not consulting with indigenous peoples, the forestry sector or northern communities. I can only hope that the minister will hold genuine consultations, truly listen to northerners and take into account the socio-economic impacts before releasing these guides. Entire communities in the north rely on forestry. I hope the minister will listen, but I wouldn't count on it.

We in the official opposition believe it is important to spend time in northern Ontario to ensure we know what

challenges are faced by people, businesses and communities in this region. To that end, our leader Patrick Brown has travelled to the north 27 times since he became leader in May 2015, and he held our last three summer caucus meetings in the north: one in Kenora, one in Sault Ste. Marie and this year in Timmins, obviously showing a great commitment to the north.

I have done a number of northern tours over the past few years. Most recently, this summer I toured northeastern Ontario and visited communities in the proposed riding of Mushkegowuk, as well as Algoma–Manitoulin and Timiskaming–Cochrane.

The first stop on my tour was the Borden gold mine in Chapleau. This will be Ontario's first all-electric gold mine. It will be the world's first all-electric gold mine. I want to thank Maarten van Koppen, senior project engineer with Goldcorp, and John Young, superintendent for safety, health, environment and security, for a very informative and interesting tour. This is an example of a mine that is going forward in Ontario, despite this government's unnecessarily bureaucratic permit process.

I want to point out that when businesses in the north succeed, businesses in southern Ontario succeed as well. For example, I recently visited MacLean Engineering in Collingwood, which builds customized mining equipment like bolters and rock breakers. I learned about MacLean during my visit to the Borden gold mine. MacLean engineering is the largest private sector employer in Collingwood, and their success relies upon the success of northern Ontario.

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Back to my northeastern Ontario tour: I met with Angelo Bazzoni, the mayor of White River. We met in the local Robin's Donuts, where I also heard from other residents of the area. I visited Lecours Lumber near Hearst. Lecours facilities are on the Constance Lake First Nation, and two thirds of their employees are indigenous. Lecours was founded in 1943 and is still owned by the Lecour family. I want to take this opportunity to thank Eric Buteau, the general manager and controller of Lecours, for his time.

I met with the mayor of Hearst, Roger Sigouin. Hearst faces a number of challenges, but one is simply getting to and from the community. There are only buses to and from Hearst two days a week. So if you're from Hearst and don't drive or don't have a car and you need to go to Timmins or Thunder Bay for a doctor's appointment, what do you do?

I have to say that I found this shocking. The draft Northern Ontario Multi-Modal Transportation Strategy, which was promised in 2011 and just released in July of this year, identifies the problem. But despite the six-year wait for this document, it doesn't offer a solution. It simply says, "The Ministry of Transportation and the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines are developing recommendations on an improved inter-community bus regime."

Hon. Steven Del Duca: That's right; we are.

Mr. Norm Miller: The Minister of Transportation is saying, "That's right." This is shocking. In 2011, it was

promised. It's 2017 now, and there's a bus two days a week in Hearst—two days a week. I think that's ridiculous for the people of the north. I guess if this government stays in power, we'll wait another six years for those recommendations, and then another six years for them to be implemented.

While I was in Hearst I also visited Columbia Forest Products. The company invested \$15 million in a new lathe line two years ago. I must say, it is an impressive piece of equipment, and it produces very high-quality plywood. I was impressed not only with the equipment, but that this company has invested in jobs in northern Ontario while this government does everything it can do to kill jobs in northern Ontario.

Thank you to Dan Bowes, Ontario woodlands and fibre resources manager; Gilles Levesque, general manager; and Mike Fournier, plant manager, for taking the time to show me around.

From Hearst, I went to Kapuskasing, where I met with executives from Tembec and other local business people. I want to thank André Ouimette and Michel Lessard from Tembec for taking the time to meet with me. In May, it was announced that Tembec has been sold to Rayonier. The new owners have committed to maintaining the Ontario operations, which employ more than 1,100 people, mostly across northern Ontario. I do hope this government will ensure the wood allocation is transferred so this purchase can go through.

Next, I met with a group of local business people, including a residential landlord, retailers, an insurance broker, a car dealer, a landscaping company, a restaurant franchisee and the mayor of Kapuskasing, Al Spacek, president of FONOM, who also dropped in for that round table. This group had a number of concerns, but one of the largest issues they raised was the shortage of skilled workers and the fact that young people leave northern Ontario and don't come back. One possible cause they mentioned was that there are fewer subsidies for hiring students.

I would like to thank André Robichaud for helping to set up these meetings in Kapuskasing. I should point out that Kapuskasing and Hearst will be the population centres for the proposed riding of Mushkegowuk.

The next morning, I toured the Northern College campus in Kirkland Lake. I got to see the welding shop, the water treatment lab and the nursing lab. This college offers great programs and high-tech facilities. Tyy Dearden is the welding instructor, and I certainly hope his students appreciate not only the facilities, but his enthusiasm. Northern even has an actual miniaturized water treatment plant right there in the classroom. I especially wanted to see the welding shop because, of course, we have Connor Industries in Parry Sound that builds world-famous Stanley boats. I've met with the owner, and they're always short of welders. When I toured MacLean Engineering in Collingwood recently, they also complained that they could do more work but they have a shortage of welders.

I want to thank Dr. Audrey Penner, vice-president of the college, and her team for opening up their college to

me in the middle of August. While this campus of Northern College isn't in the new ridings, it does serve much of the north.

From Kirkland Lake, I drove to Thornloe to visit the beef farm owned by Ontario beef president Matt Bowman and his wife, Elaine. I wanted to visit a beef farm because Ontario beef is promoting a major expansion of farming in northern Ontario, including into the proposed riding of Mushkegowuk. Having been there and seen it first-hand, I am confident their program would be a success if the government would release crown land for farming. I want to thank Matt and Elaine for welcoming me into their home.

Finally, I met up with a number of my caucus colleagues for a tour of the Georgia-Pacific mill in Englehart, organized by the member from Nipissing. I was disturbed to hear that unreliable electricity is one of the biggest challenges this plant faces. Another huge issue for this plant is that they rely on truck transportation, and they're located on a dangerous stretch of two-lane highway. Now, Madam Speaker, I'll point out that they are right on Highway 11, not on a side road, and this is the Trans-Canada Highway. You need to drive it to experience it.

Throughout this tour, I met with businesses and communities that were succeeding not because of this government's policies, but in spite of them. Time and again, I heard that they felt government did not understand their challenges or care about their livelihoods.

While this summer I didn't make it to northwestern Ontario, I did get there last year, and I've done many week-long northern winter trips with the leader of our party. I remember people's frustration with the highways, in particular the Trans-Canada Highway. I can only imagine how much more frustrated they are when, in late August, they heard that the twinning of Highway 17 won't be completed by 2020, as promised, but maybe 2021 or later; the government really isn't sure.

On the drive from White River to Hearst, we passed through Hornepayne, which has definitely fallen upon hard times because the mill there has closed because the government would not agree to purchase electricity from the cogeneration plant in late 2015. The town looked like a ghost town: stores and restaurants closed, no one out shopping or going to work or otherwise moving around. Unfortunately, unless this government starts to take the concerns of northern Ontarians seriously, I imagine a lot of other towns might start to look like Hornepayne.

Hornepayne is an example of the failure of this government's northern growth plan. This plan, introduced in 2011, promised to establish a Northern Policy Institute, develop a long-term strategy for a more integrated transportation infrastructure, grow and diversify the northern economy, and attract people and investment to northern Ontario. Let's see how successful the northern Ontario growth plan has been.

Well, they did establish a Northern Policy Institute, although from what I've seen they don't actually listen to its advice.

As I said, after six years, they finally released a draft Northern Ontario Multi-Modal Transportation Strategy. It took them six years to write a draft that really just reads like a laundry list of campaign promises. It talks about all the right things, like inter-community bus service and passenger rail, but it doesn't offer any solutions.

As far as attracting people to the north, this government has failed. Between 2011 and 2016, the population aged 15 years of age and older in northern Ontario declined by almost 10,000, from 637,642 to 627,792. And why are they leaving? Because full-time employment dropped from 284,083 jobs in 2011 to 278,717 jobs in 2016, and part-time employment fell from 75,433 jobs to 68,883 jobs.

What about investment? Total building permits in northern Ontario dropped by 26% between 2011 and 2016, and the value of industrial building permits plummeted by 44%, from \$117 million to \$66 million.

Madam Speaker, I think the numbers speak for themselves. Any way you measure it, the northern growth plan has been a dismal failure.

To get back to this bill, we support it, but I have to say this: The government is offering these two new ridings to northern Ontario as a peace offering. Having not listened to northerners and facing the rise of the separatist Northern Ontario Party, this government says it is offering up two additional ridings to strengthen the voice of northerners. We support strengthening the voice of northern Ontario in the Legislature, but even with two more northern MPPs, we don't believe this government would listen.

1000

That's the end of my formal speech, but as I see I have a couple of minutes left, I would just like to further demonstrate how the government is not listening to northern Ontario.

As you know, on that tour that I was talking about, one of the examples I gave was a mill that I visited. When I met with the mill manager, he said, "We're in the process of trying to deal with a caribou recovery plan under the Endangered Species Act. I'm a hunter. I'm a fisherman. I've hunted my whole life. I've never seen a caribou. We have to plan for 90 kilometres north of our mill"—and this mill was a mill that was 70% indigenous employees or workers. This caribou recovery plan for caribou that don't exist could affect the very livelihood of the mill. It could cease to exist, depending on what happens with that plant.

So I simply say that the government needs to take into consideration that people actually live in the north, that people rely on jobs, that those communities should count for something, and the harm that's going to happen should be at least measured, for a plan for caribou that don't exist there.

I think that is one of the biggest complaints you hear driving around the north: Toronto-centred decision-making, and we heard it from some of the other members. Decisions made in Toronto just don't work in northern Ontario. In most cases, they really hurt the

people who live and work and rely on a job and are trying to make a go in the north.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this bill today.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Being from northern Ontario, it's always an honour to be able to speak about northern Ontario and, today, on the bill to create extra ridings in northern Ontario.

I'd like to focus my comments—because it's questions and comments—on the comments of the Conservative members; specifically, the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, who said that the only way northern Ontario is going to ever get back on its feet is by electing a Conservative government. I'd like to point out that the last time we had a Conservative government, with a Premier from northern Ontario, roads were downloaded and social housing was downloaded with no money to pay for it. We have a town, Iroquois Falls, in my riding, which has the most kilometres of road per person in the province, and as a result, they had to close bridges and close roads because of our friends to the right. And the Liberals, in 14 years, have never fixed that. We're still having to close roads.

The member from Nipissing, whom I deeply respect and who is from northern Ontario and proud of it, I'm sure, stated that when you fly over northern Ontario, you don't see anything but rock and swamp. I've farmed my whole life in northern Ontario, and maybe that's all you see in Nipissing and North Bay, but over northern Ontario, there are all kinds of other opportunities that we can exploit.

Finally, the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka was very accurate in his remarks. He recognized that there are more things in northern Ontario than rock and swamp. I appreciated his remarks. I don't agree with all of them, but I appreciate that he accurately reflected many of the issues that are happening in the north as we speak.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Hon. David Zimmer: I want to speak for just a couple of minutes on this.

One of the things that we as a government are very proud of in the work that was done by the Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission was the extensive degree of consultation. It's important to remember that there's great diversity in the northern communities. There are also population issues and so on—scarcity of population. But within that smaller population, there are huge diversity issues. That's why it was very, very important for the commission to do an extensive consultation and to reach in and hear what those very diverse communities in the north thought about this issue. So we created the commission and ensured that (1) it was independent and (2) that all of the commissioners had the appropriate skills and sensitivities to deal with this issue.

The commissioners paid special attention to a number of issues to do with this question of diversity and special

needs and so on with respect to the north. They were tasked with looking at particular communities, special interests and needs. They were tasked with looking at the whole issue of representation and ensuring that the new ridings provided an adequate voice for indigenous communities. They had to respect the municipal and other administrative boundaries. They had to deal with the sparsity and density of the population. They had to deal with the whole issue of the difficulty of communication and transportation in the Far North. It was up to those very skilled commissioners to take all of those factors into account when they did their consultation, and I know they did a tremendous job on the consultation.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: As always, it's an honour to stand and represent the constituents of Niagara West-Glanbrook, which is obviously a southern riding—quite a southern riding—in our beautiful province of Ontario.

Also, as the member for Niagara West-Glanbrook and a member of the Progressive Conservative caucus, I was very pleased to hear the speeches and the contributions to debate this morning from the members from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, Nipissing and Parry Sound-Muskoka. I thank them for their contributions.

I did want to very briefly comment on something that really struck me. As I was listening to this debate, I heard the member for Northumberland-Quinte West heckling the member here. When the member was speaking about the fact that our leader has visited the north 27 times and the fact that our caucus is making an effort to reach out to those in the north and to build a stronger connection with those in the north, the member for Northumberland-Quinte West yelled out that the north is a no-man's land, and that's why we go there.

I don't know; I found that very insulting, quite frankly. I don't think the north is a no-man's land. I think we've heard that the north is a very important part of our province that contributes to the socio-economic culture of our province in significant ways. We should treasure the north, we should celebrate the north, and we should be doing everything we can to build the north up. Quite frankly, I was disappointed to hear that sentiment from the government benches.

Although I haven't spent a lot of time in the north myself, I did have the opportunity to go visit Timmins earlier this summer with the PC caucus. I must say, it's a beautiful area. We need to be doing more to make sure that here in Toronto their voices are heard. Bill 152, I believe, does contribute to that. I look forward to hearing the continued debate on additional ridings and constituencies in the north.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I think it is fair to say that in this House, for the last 150 years that we've had a Legislative Assembly, we have had but one First Nation representative ever elected here. How could that be? In order for us to do a good job, we have to be representa-

tive of the people who live in this province, and in over a 150-year period we only managed to elect one First Nation representative once. This is a shame on all of us.

I would say in the Far North, there is support for creating those new ridings. I would say there was support. It dwindled away really quickly when we realized that the boundaries that have been chosen will mean that Mushkegowuk only has 27% of indigenous people within its boundaries. It has some 60% of francophones within the boundaries, so you can see the dilemma there. In Kiwetinoong, we do a bit better, with 78% of indigenous and First Nations represented within the new boundaries. I know that the intentions are there, but the actual results, not so much.

Why is it that they set up a process that they were only allowed to look at two ridings? In the north, those boundaries don't always make sense. They should have given the commission the right to look at all of northern Ontario if our goal was to make sure that we have a fair representation of the people who live here, which would include indigenous, Inuit, First Nations and Métis.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka to wrap up.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thanks to the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane, the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, the member from Niagara West-Glanbrook and the member from Nickel Belt for their comments.

I'll focus, to begin with, on the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane: Thank you for saying I've got some of it right. I appreciate that. He did take a bit of a slam at the PCs, mind you. I'd like to go back a little further and think back to all the northern PC representatives like Leo Bernier in the northwest, Alan Pope in the Timmins area, René Brunelle from Moonbeam and all the great representation.

I think back to when I toured Detour Gold last year. There was about over a 100-kilometre road into Detour Gold. It's a provincial highway, and I'm riding on this highway and I said, "Where does this highway go?" and they said, "It goes to the gold mine." The gold mine opened up in the mid-1980s, so it was the PC government under Bill Davis that built the road to the mine. The mine is still operating, creating all kinds of wealth in the province. If we'd seen action like that in the Ring of Fire, there would be a mine operating there by now, but that has not happened. In fact, the big issue that they brought up at the Detour Gold mine tour was how long it takes and how hard it is to create a mine in the province of Ontario. There are huge challenges with permitting.

Back to the issue of the two new ridings that this bill creates: You need to get up to the north to see just how huge it is. I think people in southern Ontario don't realize just how immense it is. There are unique challenges for the indigenous communities. I look forward to having some indigenous representation in this House. I think it's absolutely needed for the unique challenges that those far remote communities face, and hopefully it can make a difference, if the government listens to those new mem-

bers and actually deals with the concerns. As I pointed out in my speech, to this point, it seems like the government doesn't listen. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Seeing as it's almost 10:15, I will recess the House until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1012 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'd like to introduce a student from Elliot Lake Secondary School and a potential future MPP for Algoma-Manitoulin, Quinn Massicotte, and his father, Chris Massicotte, from Elliot Lake.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? The Minister of Innovation.

Hon. Reza Moridi: Research, Innovation and Science.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Research, innovation—

Hon. Reza Moridi: And science.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, I didn't get it all right, but that's good enough.

Hon. Reza Moridi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, please join me in welcoming my friend Hassan Amirzadeh and his son Arman Amirzadeh and my newly appointed colleague, Rownock Zamani, visiting the House today.

Mr. Michael Harris: I would like to welcome Leila Attar from Ottawa to this Legislature. She joined me this morning at a press conference. Thank you, Leila, for being here today.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to introduce Erin Fotheringham. She's from the Ontario Association of Food Banks. And just to remind everybody, this week is Hunger Awareness Week.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: It is my pleasure to welcome a group of seniors from Brampton. They are here in the east members' lobby, and they are Budh Singh Grewal, Sampuran Singh Chanian, Ranjit Singh Bhandhol, Satbir Singh Sidhu, Labh Singh Sohi, Gulzar Singh Bachhal, Surinder Singh Grewal, Mohinder Singh Nagra, Gurdev Singh Dhaliwal, Harnek Singh Gill, Bhagwan Singh Malhi, Major Singh Sekhon, Harbant Singh Marhar, Narnjan Singh and Jagjit Singh Mann. I welcome them to Queen's Park. Please join me in welcoming them.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like to introduce Gloria Kovach, who is here this morning for the Canadian police and peace officers' run, in memory of her daughter Jen. Thank you, Gloria, for being here today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions?

To follow my own advice, I am going to introduce someone who will be joining us in the House. This gentleman is coming to us from Wisconsin: Representative Cory Mason of the Wisconsin State Assembly.

Mr. Mason—oh, he made it. Good. Mr. Mason is also currently the chair of the Great Lakes Legislative Caucus. The Ontario Legislature is a member of that caucus.

Ontario is hosting the annual meeting of this multilateral parliamentary organization, to be held this weekend in Toronto. Some of the members are participating, and I want to thank them for confirming their participation in this important cross-border forum.

Representative Mason actually lived in the riding of Brantford for a short time, and we're going on a tour this afternoon later on.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please join Representative Mason in not hearing any heckling.

Please join me in warmly welcoming Representative Mason from Wisconsin.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Minister of Education. Yesterday, I read a headline and a story that left a knot in the pit of my stomach. The headline read, "Mother Demands Answers after Son, 8, Put in Restraints and Injected on First Day of School." A young Toronto boy on the first day of school was taken to the hospital in the back of a police car, alone. The young boy was placed in restraints and then the boy was injected with a sedative. The boy was eight years old, injected with a sedative and shackled to a bed at a hospital. That is disgusting and unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, how does something like that happen in Ontario?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: It's important that every student in our school system has access to the supports they need. The priority for school boards and for the Ministry of Education is the safety of all students. In the situation that the member opposite has raised, this is not a position that I'm in, that I'm going to comment specifically on that case, other than to say that it is my understanding that the parent, the school and the school board have been in communication, in contact, and that they are working on ensuring that the student has the supports they need to attend school. That is happening, Mr. Speaker.

I want the House to know that the safety of all students is a priority.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the minister: I can only imagine the fear of this young boy being placed in the back of a police car, alone, and taken away from school by himself. And when the young boy's mother made it to the hospital, he pleaded with her. He said, "Please, mommy. Get them off. They're too tight."

I want everyone in the chamber to imagine if this was your nephew, if this was your child, your son. No parent should ever have to hear an eight-year-old child plead with them to have restraints removed in the hospital. The minister says, "Well, they've been in contact with the family." We need better than that. It's absolutely gutting

to hear this story, and it is no manner in which our students should be handled in our schools.

Mr. Speaker, without speaking to this specific case, how will this government assure us and guarantee that no other child in Ontario will be shackled and sedated by going to school?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Mr. Speaker, I'm not in a position to comment on the actions of hospital staff. That's not something I can do. I know that, as it relates to the student, as of September 15, the student has been reintegrated into school and that the school, the parents and the board are working together on this matter.

That is the focus: to have schools that are accepting and welcoming of students of all abilities. We are very committed to this and to providing the supports in our school system for students with special needs, for students who have mental health needs. We are providing the assistance and the supports for all of our students. We are working together to make those necessary investments so that students can have every opportunity to succeed in our schools.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the minister: The young boy's mother has said that her son is on waiting lists for Blue Hills Child and Family Centre, Kinark Child and Family Services and the York Centre. She's been told that waiting will likely be a very long year.

She is quoted as saying, "We need less wait-lists, because an eight-year-old needs the help now. A year from now, there's so much more damage that could be done.... Are we going to be looking at more incidents like this? Or on the worst extreme, him actually hurting himself?"

That's the mother's plea to the minister. That's the mother's plea to the province. We can't afford a year for her son to wait, or hundreds of thousands of others. We need to make sure this is dealt with.

Mr. Speaker, it's time this government make real progress to slash these wait-lists. Will they do that? Can we have a commitment from the minister that these wait-lists, leaving this boy abandoned—will they slash these wait-lists?

1040

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member opposite for the question. We take mental health, when it comes to young people in this province, quite seriously. In fact, for the last couple of years we've built a new strategy, a new approach to looking for ways to eliminate wait-lists because we know that the complexities that young people are going through today are very different from when we were young—in fact, very different from a decade ago. That's why we put in place Bill 89. Bill 89 looks at reorganizing mental health delivery across this

province by setting up 33 lead agencies in all of our ridings.

Mr. Speaker, here's the interesting point: The member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, voted against Bill 89, and we still don't even know why he voted against Bill 89.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. The member from Renfrew will come to order.

The member's time is up.

Hon. Michael Coteau: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It was already up. New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Minister of Finance. CUPE announced this morning that they are appealing the ruling in their lawsuit against the government. That, of course, would be the lawsuit that alleges that the sale of Hydro One was motivated by improper and ulterior purposes. CUPE alleges that it does not benefit the people of Ontario. In a direct quote—this is about "lining the pockets of political cronies on Bay Street and funnelling money" into party coffers.

Mr. Speaker, 80% of the province is against this fire sale of Hydro One. Was the government, according to CUPE, motivated by improper and ulterior purposes?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The answer is no, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the minister: One of the government's defences was that they were going to be using the fire sale of Hydro One for infrastructure. What's really interesting is that the member for Dufferin-Caledon exposed yesterday that 20% of the infrastructure budget was not used. That added up to \$3.3 billion. Coincidentally, that \$3.3 billion is pretty close to what the Hydro One sale was supposed to net for infrastructure—an interesting coincidence.

My question is pretty simple. Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Finance: Why sell Hydro One for apparent infrastructure money if the Liberals weren't going to use it?

Hon. Charles Sousa: This province, under this government, over the last 10 years, has contributed more to our infrastructure spend than other governments combined over that history. We have put in our budget \$190 billion over the next 13 years. That member opposite voted against those measures.

The law case that he makes reference to has been dismissed by the courts without merit. He knows that, and he's trying to infer something he knows is not true. What we're doing is stimulating growth, improving our economy and balancing the books, and we are making the investments necessary for our future competitiveness.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Minister of Finance—and I did not get a response on why the Hydro One fire sale funds were not used on infrastructure.

Fred Hahn from CUPE had a pretty good quote that I'll quote right here. He said, "The case is about more than the sale of Hydro One. It's about the government's responsibility to act in the best interest of its citizens. When a government abandons that responsibility, and does so to the benefit of their political party, they must be held accountable."

CUPE is right. There must be accountability. Will the minister admit that the sale of Hydro One was not about the best interests of the province of Ontario; it was about the Liberals trying to find funds to make up for their promises that they can't honour? This was not about the best interests of Ontario; it was about the best interests of the Ontario Liberal Party.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We are repurposing some of our assets, as all governments do over the course of their mandates, to try to ensure that we invest most appropriately in those measures for the benefit of our economy. That is in the best interests of Ontarians. Ontarians will remain the largest shareholder of a much more productive organization, reinvesting those proceeds into infrastructure—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, come to order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We established the Trillium Trust to ensure that all those proceeds, dollar for dollar, get earmarked specifically for those investments. The member opposite knows that, and he voted against those measures.

We are going to continue to work in the best interests of Ontarians, and that is what's important. We are looking long-term, and we're not making these election-cycle decisions that this member opposite, who has no plan, who has offered nothing in return—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. This summer a woman named Mira came to Queen's Park to tell the Liberal government about a tragic set of circumstances of her mother's experience in long-term care. Mira told us about finding her mom after almost 17 hours in bed. No one had fed her. No one had helped her reach the bathroom. No one had even shifted her body so she didn't get bed sores.

Can the Acting Premier confirm that seniors being left in beds without any care at all for 17 hours running will be part of the scope of the Wetlaufer inquiry?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: First of all, Mr. Speaker—I appreciate the question—that experience is absolutely unacceptable. Quite frankly, if Justice Gillese believes that that issue or circumstances similar to it need to be part of

the public inquiry, she has the full scope to do that. It's within her terms of reference.

We specifically, categorically left the terms of reference in her brief broad enough. Understanding her expertise and being confident in her ability, we have given her the latitude to pursue the inquiry in whatever direction she feels is most appropriate to ensure the safety and security and well-being of residents in long-term-care homes in this province.

Again, we have spoken about this many, many times. She has the terms of reference and the latitude to pursue this if she deems it appropriate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Margo lives in Windsor. She wrote to MPP Hatfield's office because she's concerned about her dad. He suffers from Alzheimer's and he lives in long-term care. Margo's dad sometimes wanders—

Hon. David Zimmer: Let Percy ask the question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Maybe these members across the way don't care about Margo and her dad, but New Democrats do care about Margo and her dad.

He suffers from Alzheimer's and he lives in long-term care. Her dad sometimes wanders out of the care facility past a rarely staffed front desk. It's particularly bad over weekends and holidays, and the home says they can't afford to staff the front desk 24/7.

Can the Acting Premier confirm that the staffing levels, particularly at the front entrances to long-term-care facilities, will be part of the Wetlaufer inquiry?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the example of the resident with high needs because of the presence of Alzheimer's. It's a form of dementia, and that's why I find it unusual and curious that the third party voted against our \$100-million investment in dementia in this province. I find it curious that the third party voted against an additional \$10 million into Behavioural Supports Ontario to provide care in long-term-care homes specifically tailored to those complex high-needs individuals, including individuals with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia. That's why I find it curious that they voted against a 2% increase to the funding for long-term-care homes, an \$80-million increase this year alone—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A sentence to wrap up, please.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, we know that there is a lot more work to be done to support our residents in long-term-care homes. That's why we're making these investments—investments they voted against.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I find it curious that the Minister of Health refused to have a broadly scoped public inquiry to address all of the problems in long-term care. That's what's curious, because it will show the failure of this government.

1050

I was in Woodstock a few weeks ago meeting with a group of people who all have loved ones in long-term

care. At the meeting, I was handed an internal memo from a local long-term-care home which gave guidelines on how to deal with staff who call in sick to the facility. The memo says that being short 50% staff on any given shift is acceptable; it's considered acceptable by the management of that long-term-care home.

Will the Acting Premier guarantee that the Wetlaufer inquiry will look into long-term-care-home practices related to staffing levels and procedures for what to do when staff can't make it in for their shift?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, we intentionally drafted the terms of reference broadly so that the justice would be able to have the latitude she felt was important to address the issues that Ontarians are asking about.

But it's important that the public also understand that since 2014, we have been inspecting 100% of long-term-care homes in this province. When you look at the non-compliances in 2016, we actually saw an 18% decrease in the non-compliances. In fact, there were 12% fewer compliance orders issued in 2016. So our inspections are having an important impact. In fact, since 2014, the average number of compliance orders issued during an annual inspection has been reduced by over 50%.

Our investments are making a difference. Our inspections are making a difference. We're continuing to work on this challenging issue because we are committed to the safety, security and well-being of Ontarians in long-term-care homes.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Acting Premier. You know what I don't get? I don't get why the Minister of Health isn't the one who needs to identify what the problems are in long-term care and then put an inquiry in place to deal with those problems. It shouldn't be left up to Ms. Gillese. It should be done by the Minister of Health for the province of Ontario, the person responsible for long-term care here in the province of Ontario, not the justice who is in charge. The minister is in charge.

On June 19, I received a letter from a woman whose 91-year-old father was admitted to the Georgian Bay hospital. Long story short, his condition worsened in that hospital. He was not sent to long-term care, even though he couldn't be taken care of at home. Why? Because this government doesn't allow people to move straight from hospital into long-term care. Will this be dealt with by the inquiry?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm confident in the work that Justice Gillese will be undertaking on behalf of Ontarians. I also believe and am confident that Ontarians want this government and this inquiry to get to the bottom of what happened in Woodstock, in London and in the surrounding communities where additional assaults took place.

This was a horrible tragedy, Mr. Speaker, and it's unfortunate—I have done everything humanly possible to avoid this becoming a partisan issue, despite the approach taken by the third party.

Ontarians want answers to how Elizabeth Wetlaufer was possibly able to get away with the murders and the assaults. We owe them those answers. That's the focus of the inquiry. That's what Ontarians have asked for. But we've intentionally left the terms broad to give her the latitude to take the approach that she feels will ensure the safety and security of Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Right now in Ontario, there are over 30,000 people on a waiting list for long-term care. That's 30,000 families who are left dangling, not knowing whether or not their loved ones will get the care they need. Can the Acting Premier guarantee that the 30,000-person waiting list for long-term care in Ontario will be a part of the Wetlaufer inquiry?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I've acknowledged many times that there is more work to be done as our population ages and as we are faced with an aging population that also has very complex needs. We're seeing that in our long-term-care homes.

That's why we're making investments in behavioural supports so that we've got specialized teams in long-term-care homes that are able to provide that highest-quality, knowledgeable care and support to individuals with dementia, with Alzheimer's, with other complex needs.

We have more than doubled our budget in long-term care, and we've made an important investment of an additional \$80 million this year alone in a number of categories and areas. We're committed to redeveloping 30,000 beds. We've built 10,000 new beds since coming into office. We've already redeveloped 13,000.

Of course there's more work to be done. This is my highest priority within the ministry when it comes to long-term care: making sure that these individuals are safe, secure and well supported.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: A frail, elderly woman left in bed for 17 hours; a senior with Alzheimer's leaving his long-term-care home unnoticed and unattended; long-term-care homes that accept 50% staff capacity as safe; a daughter worried about her father being forced to return home to wait, even though the doctors said that he can't be left alone at home; and 30,000 families hoping that their loved ones will get into a long-term-care home right now: This situation is dire, and yet the Liberal government still refuses to find and fix the problems.

Why won't the Acting Premier not leave to chance that Justice Gillese might perhaps look at some of these issues, and instead expand the scope of the Wetlaufer inquiry on his own, like he should do, to ensure that all of these systemic issues that are causing so much pain, confusion and difficulty for our loved ones and their families are actually dealt with in the scope of the inquiry? Just do it.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, by her tone and increasing rhetoric, it appears that the leader of the third party may not have confidence in Justice Gillese in terms of her ability to lead this—

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I have no confidence in you, Eric, and neither does anyone else in Ontario.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know she doesn't want to hear that, but she came—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, she came dangerously close in her question—I inferred that she may not want a public inquiry at all.

Ontarians want to get to the bottom of what happened in Woodstock, London and the surrounding communities. We owe that to the parents, the brothers, the sisters, the loved ones, those who have been so badly affected by this tragedy. That is the central focus of this public inquiry. It has to be. Those are the answers that we need to reach.

They want this inquiry faster, but they keep loading it up and loading it up so that it will take years—

Mr. Paul Miller: Loading up? We're doing the right thing. You should get a shovel for that. What a load of baloney.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Is it pharmacare—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

New question?

OPIOID ABUSE

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Minister of Health. This morning we heard the personal trauma faced by 19-year-old Leila Attar. Leila has joined us today in the members' gallery, and I thank you, Leila, for joining us. She endured a near-death experience after taking a Percocet that a pill-press operator laced with fentanyl. Leila, other victims, their families and police officers are calling on governments to restrict illegal use of pill presses churning out counterfeit and often deadly pills onto our streets.

While the minister has called a pill-press ban over-simplistic in dealing with opioids, those directly impacted by counterfeit, laced drugs understand that it is a key step to addressing this deadly threat at its source. Today, the minister and the Liberals will have a choice, with the debate on the Illegal Pill Press Act. Join us to take these death-dealing machines, already in Ontario, off our streets, or allow them to continue tearing families apart. What will the minister do?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question. I look forward to the debate. I want to acknowledge Leila in the gallery, as well, quite frankly, for her courage in coming

forward and telling her story. For anybody, it's unimaginable, but it must be incredibly difficult to demonstrate that courage, so thank you.

1100

When I said that banning pill presses in an Ontario context was overly simplistic, I meant that in the overall context of addressing the opioid public health crisis in this province.

I also mentioned that, as the member opposite knows, the federal government has already passed legislation in Bill C-37 that includes a provision that explicitly prohibits and renders illegal unregistered importation of designated devices, such as pill presses and encapsulators—it's actually broader, perhaps—that may be used in the illicit manufacture of narcotics.

I understand why that party is solely focused, it seems, on the law and order aspect. It needs to be a broad, comprehensive response to the public health crisis.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: We acknowledge the actual role the federal government has taken on Bill C-37. They acknowledge the importance and detriment that these pill presses are in fact having on our communities right across Canada, but of course that's only the importation fact. We're talking about possession because we know they're here, right now, in the province of Ontario.

I'm going to make this question as overly simplistic as the minister feels about the united call of victims, their families, police officers and myself to ban pill presses churning out these counterfeit opioids on our streets. Does the minister support getting illegal opioids off our streets through penalties and jail for illegal pill manufacturers—for possessing pill manufacturers—or is he just soft on crime?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: It's critically important that we address the public health crisis before us, this opioid crisis in this province, in this country, from a multi-faceted approach. Clearly there is a law and order component to this; nobody can deny that. We need to do everything we can to address that.

However, I'm disappointed that this is the only suggestion that the party opposite has brought forward, to a crisis where we, since last summer, have been providing naloxone across the province free of charge for more than 1,500 pharmacies, where we're now distributing it at the rate of 8,000 a month through our public health units, where we're making fentanyl testing strips available to our supervised injection sites and the pop-up sites so that those users can test for the presence of fentanyl to save lives.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Deputy Premier. There are close to 3,000 CAMI auto workers who have been on strike in Ingersoll since last week. I visited them last night on the picket line. These skilled auto workers are on strike because they need the company to commit to them to keep making the Equinox here

in Ontario, instead of moving production to Mexico. It's obvious that we do not have an auto strategy, which means companies across Ontario can close and move production to Mexico simply to maximize profits. That hurts workers and the communities that they live in.

So my question is: These Unifor workers are fighting to keep jobs here in Ontario. Why isn't this Liberal government fighting as hard as they are?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Let me start off by taking this opportunity to urge both sides, General Motors and Unifor, to redouble their efforts to very quickly reach a settlement in what is a very challenging situation. We know that not only are those workers impacted by being out of work at CAMI; there are ripple effects now starting to impact workers throughout our supply chain. This is a very serious situation, one that we're following very closely.

Of course, we're going to allow the collective bargaining process to unfold as it should, but we will definitely urge both parties to do their very best to, as soon as possible, reach a settlement to get these workers back to work.

The member is absolutely wrong when he says that we don't have an auto strategy. We have one of the most ambitious and aggressive auto strategies anywhere in the industrialized world. In the supplementary, I'll be happy to talk about the great results we're getting from that strategy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Again to the Deputy Premier: The CEO of GM made \$22.6 million last year while demanding that workers freeze their wages, cut their benefits, cut their pensions and accept a two-tier wage system. Last year, GM saw record profits, yet there are still those who fear that GM is going to move production of the Equinox out of the province of Ontario.

Workers have had enough, and they're fighting back. They want job security and to know that these jobs will be staying in Ontario, not only for themselves but for their kids and their grandkids.

There are over 15,000 more workers affected across the province, including St. Catharines, including Niagara. If the CAMI jobs are lost, these jobs are lost too. An auto strategy would recognize that.

When is the Liberal government going to show auto workers that their jobs are important and fight along with them to keep these jobs right here in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We've seen \$2.6 billion invested in Ontario since the fall of 2016 alone, just in the auto sector. That's 40,000 direct jobs that have been supported by those investments and 65,000 indirect jobs across this province out into the auto parts sector. Thousands of indirect jobs have been created because of our investments, Mr. Speaker. In Windsor—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Both members know better than to use somebody's name. This House is

respectful by saying their riding or their title. Also, we could do without the heckling.

Finish, Minister.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since 2004, this government has invested \$1.4 billion in the auto sector, leveraging \$15.8 billion in private sector investment, helping—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. As the minister knows, last week I was in Breslau to announce that our government is investing over \$5 million in Conestoga Meat Packers through our Jobs and Prosperity Fund. This investment will not only help support the creation of 170 new jobs; it's also going to enhance productivity and innovation at this great company to support export and revenue growth.

As processors in Ontario add value to 65% of what is grown in the province, it's encouraging to see that our government is making these important investments in food and beverage manufacturers. This investment is strengthening companies like Conestoga and Ontario's pork value chain.

Minister, by the way, you have a lot of fans there in Breslau at Conestoga Meat Packers. Could you please explain how our investment in companies like Conestoga is helping to build up Ontario's farm and food sector?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Fans in Peterborough and fans in Breslau; that's pretty good.

I want to thank the member from Kitchener Centre for her great question this morning and for her attendance at the International Plowing Match this week.

Mr. Speaker, our government believes in making strategic investments in our farm and food sector, helping to grow this dynamic, \$37-billion industry. That's why in 2014 we launched the 10-year, \$400-million Food and Beverage Growth Fund as part of our government's Jobs and Prosperity Fund. By partnering with food-processing businesses, we're helping to keep our farm and food sector strong and helping to support good jobs and a thriving agricultural sector.

I had the opportunity on Monday morning to make a similar announcement at Sofina Foods Inc. in beautiful Mitchell, Ontario, where our government committed over \$5 million to support the creation of 100 jobs in this region. By investing in Sofina Foods, we'll help boost the turkey supply chain in the province of Ontario and build stronger communities in Mitchell and Dublin. On this side of the House—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Hon. Jeff Leal: —we believe in making investments—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I say thank you; you stop. I stand; you sit.

Supplementary?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Thank you for that answer, Minister.

The member for Kitchener-Conestoga was invited to this event. It's in his riding and it is disappointing that he didn't show up. I think it's important for us to demonstrate—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Pretty low.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lambton, come to order.

The member from Kitchener Centre knows better and shall not mention other ridings' businesses. Thank you for correcting it, and withdraw.

1110

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Thank you, Speaker. I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on with your question.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Speaker, I would like to say that I have noticed many occasions when members of the opposition will point out when the Premier or cabinet ministers do not go to their ridings. I know it's not appropriate for us to say that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm standing.

The member's not helping herself. If it happens again, I will pass on your question. Ask your question.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Thank you, Speaker. In today's Waterloo Region Record, an editorial states, "Government grants to privately-owned enterprises are often controversial. But if the policy of the Ontario government is to support Ontario businesses, Conestoga Meat Packers is as worthy a recipient as you'll find."

Minister, the opposition voted against our Jobs and Prosperity Fund and the opposition has been critical about investment. Speaker, could the minister please share with the members of this House where our government stands on supporting our food processing sector?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member from Kitchener Centre for her follow-up question. Our government has a clear plan to create jobs and opportunities in Ontario's farm and food sector, a sector that employs over 800,000 people in this great province. From Breslau to Mitchell, we are making investments in companies so they can continue to grow and make the food and beverage products that people in this province enjoy every day.

On this side of the House, we believe in providing supports needed for our manufacturers to compete in the 21st century. On this side of the House, we believe in providing companies with opportunities to become more productive and use innovative technology. We believe in making investments that will give our companies the tools to grow their exports and compete with brands around the world.

Mr. Speaker, we'll continue to make investments in our food processing sector to help them scale up, export

to more countries and make jobs available in our towns and cities. We look forward to making other great announcements—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Nipissing, come to order.

Hon. Jeff Leal: —that will demonstrate our government's commitment to growing the food processing sector in Ontario.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's disappointing that the member from Nipissing continues to heckle when I actually call him to order.

New question.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Mr. Randy Hillier: My questions is to the Attorney General. In June 2012, Scott Johnson lost his life from a collapse of a stage at a Radiohead concert here in Toronto. The company and engineer were charged with 13 offences alleging neglect. Yet, once again, all charges were stayed due to egregious and excessive court delays.

In a statement released to their millions of followers worldwide, the band said that this decision "offers no consolation, closure or assurance that this kind of accident will not happen again." And: "This is an insult to the memory of Scott Johnson, his parents and our crew."

Speaker, the rampant failings of our justice system at the hands of this government is attracting both international attention and universal condemnation. Is the minister so preoccupied giving Liberal advice to his friends on trial that he can't perform his duty in the administration of justice?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The member opposite raises a very important and serious issue. As we all know, last June, the Supreme Court of Canada rendered a monumental decision called the Jordan decision, where they have outlined very specific deadlines under which criminal cases have to be heard. That decision is a game-changer in terms of how criminal justice should be done in not only the province of Ontario but across the country. We responded to the challenge immediately after the Jordan decision by adding new resources within our criminal justice system, hiring 13 new judges, over 30 new assistant crown attorneys and investing money in legal aid, not to mention support staff.

But Speaker, we have not stopped there, and in my supplementary I will speak about the kind of structural changes that Ontario is driving with the federal government to ensure delays are prevented.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Back to the Attorney General: I will say that access to justice didn't just come along with the Jordan decision. That is a long-standing constitutional obligation. The Attorney General is also charged with ensuring the proper administration of justice. Judge Ann Nelson makes clear in her judgment that this result is a "failure on the part of the administration of justice." She

also notes that “Mr. Johnson’s family ... can justifiably complain that justice has not been done.”

There is a crisis in our courts, a crisis which is a direct result of this lackadaisical approach that this government has taken over the last decade.

Both those seeking justice and those who serve our courts agree that the administration of justice is in disrepute, and our courts cannot effectively deliver their mandate. Speaker, is it not time that we say “enough is enough” and have the minister apologize to the Johnson family and the people of Ontario for these failures?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Decisions like these are very difficult. That is why we are working very actively to make sure we expedite our criminal justice system to make it more efficient.

That’s why Ontario has been the leading voice in the country in making the argument that we need to pay serious attention to the impact of the Jordan decision. It is a game-changer, and we need to bring meaningful structural changes to our criminal court to make sure that our criminal justice system is effective, efficient and actually looks after the victims, their families and, of course, our communities.

That is why just last week I was at the federal, provincial and territorial meeting of justice ministers in Vancouver, where Ontario took the lead in proposing reforms to the system.

I hope the member opposite and the party opposite will support the government’s position as to how we can reform our system to make it more effective.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question is for the Deputy Premier. Good morning.

People in Windsor are angry and disappointed with the government’s response to the recent flooding disaster.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs stood in this House and said that private insurance was readily available. He was wrong. The Insurance Bureau of Canada told him he was wrong. Some insurance companies no longer honour claims from people living in our flood-prone areas. The disaster recovery assistance plan doesn’t cover sewer backups.

How will this government close the gap in coverage between private insurers and the government’s disaster assistance recovery program?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Bill Mauro: Thank you to the member for the question.

Speaker, the program is obviously a pan-Ontario program. I have activated the program in multiple municipalities over the course of the last 15 months or so. I would tell you, and I would tell the House and those who are interested in this file, that the program is very well regarded. The reason that the program is well regarded and in place is because it helps people to recover from disasters where there are events that have occurred for

which there is no private insurance available. That is, primarily, overland flooding.

Before I went out and made my visits over the last 15 months, or before I went out very recently in the second Windsor event in the last 12 months, I ensured from staff and my ministry that in fact insurance was available. That’s the information I’ve gotten back from my ministry. I didn’t make that comment willy-nilly. I checked; they tell me there is.

At the end of the day, this is less about private insurance than it is about other things, and I’ll speak more to that in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Representatives of the insurance bureau were in my office on Monday saying insurance is not readily available in Windsor, and they said they told the minister that.

Climate change is real; extreme weather events are hitting all parts of Ontario. Natural disasters caused by heavy rains are occurring too frequently. This government is downloading the effects of climate change onto ordinary citizens. Some of my residents have gone through this twice within the past year—less than a year.

When will the government update the coverage guidelines, especially for those who can no longer qualify for private insurance?

Hon. Bill Mauro: When I was in Windsor, and we had a press conference there, I mentioned as part of that press conference that we all have a role to play when it comes to dealing with these unfortunately more regular and more intense weather-related events. In fact, I complimented the city of Windsor and other municipalities that already have programs in place that can directly affect, and lessen the likelihood that they would be affected by, these situations.

The city of Windsor has programs in place and has had them for some time. There are work and options available to individual homeowners.

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I also said the municipality has responsibility when it comes to how we plan our communities. I said the province has a role to play when it comes to infrastructure funding—and obviously, we have a fantastic record of demonstrating support for municipalities on infrastructure. As well, I said the federal government, through its National Disaster Mitigation Program, also has a role to play. As a group, we need to look more closely at this, and perhaps over the coming years, programs may evolve.

ROAD SAFETY

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. I know that the minister has said many times, both in and outside of this House, that road safety is his top priority. But the fact of the matter is that there are still far too many collisions that result in serious injuries or fatalities on our roads, and far too often the victim is a vulnerable road user, a pedestrian or a cyclist,

who has little to no protection compared to those travelling in a car. We need to take extra care to make sure this group of road users is safe, especially if we want to promote these active and environmentally friendly modes of transportation in Ontario.

A number of these fatalities have unfortunately occurred in my riding of Davenport. I know that there are many people in my community of Davenport who want to make the choice to bike or walk to work, but they want to know that they can do so safely. Would the minister please provide an update to this House on what his ministry is doing to make our roads safer than they are today for our most vulnerable?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to thank the member from Davenport for her question and for being a staunch advocate for helping us to understand the importance of making sure that we constantly improve the road safety measures that we have. Our government knows that whether you're in a vehicle, on a bike or walking on the sidewalk, for example, you deserve to be able to get from point A to B safely at all times.

That's why we've taken serious action over the last number of years to make sure that our roads are even safer, through strong legislation, public education and ongoing work with our extraordinary road safety partners, including enforcement officers.

But last fall and winter, we saw a concerning increase in the number of serious and fatal injuries involving our most vulnerable road users. We knew then that we had to act, and we have not been standing still.

Our work over the last number of months has led us to the point where we are now able to introduce bold new measures that would, if passed, make our roads safer, especially for our seniors and our kids. I look forward to providing more details in my supplementary answer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thank you to the minister for his answer. I'm pleased to hear that your ministry has been working hard on these various proposals that would keep our roads safer for everyone, but particularly our most vulnerable.

However, with the federal legalization of cannabis less than a year away, we need to be ready to deal with the impact this will have on road safety in order to save lives and keep up our record of having among the safest roads in North America. I know that members in my community of Davenport are eager to hear that we have a plan in place to keep drug-impaired drivers off our roads through strong penalties.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can you please provide more information on how these new proposed measures take into account additional road safety challenges that we can expect post-July 1, 2018?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Our proposed changes do, in fact, take into account the upcoming federal legalization of cannabis. For example, we're proposing zero tolerance for novice, young and commercial drivers, as well as increased penalties for drivers who fail or refuse to take a sobriety test.

Beyond impaired driving, we are also proposing a comprehensive set of tools that would make our roads safer, including tougher penalties to combat distracted driving, increased penalties for drivers who fail to yield for pedestrians, and also a brand new offence, the stiffest penalty that would exist in the Highway Traffic Act, if passed—a new offence for careless driving causing death or bodily harm.

If you'll permit me, I want to pay tribute to the current Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, the member from Burlington, who has fought hard and long on these issues and, as a private member, brought forward legislation in 2016 to make this happen. Because of her advocacy, we're going to get it done.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. My question today is for the Minister of Energy. In January, this government rolled out another sneaky attack on families and businesses when they launched their cap-and-trade carbon pricing scheme.

The Auditor General conducted a survey of Ontario's natural gas ratepayers, and 89% of the respondents thought it important to disclose the impact and cost of cap-and-trade on natural gas bills.

Today, we will debate my common-sense legislation to make cap-and-trade a separate line item on natural gas bills.

My question is simple: Do the Liberals support transparency and accountability, or will the government continue hiding the cost of cap-and-trade on consumers' natural gas bills?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: The decision on how to present cap-and-trade on consumers' bills was made by the Ontario Energy Board. That's an independent, arm's-length regulator for the province's energy sector. It did so based on extensive consultations with consumers, utilities and—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, second time.

Carry on.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker—including over 40 written submissions.

In their decision, the Ontario Energy Board highlighted that cap-and-trade costs are a part of doing the business of delivering natural gas to homes and businesses. To quote the board: "In the OEB's view, separating out cap-and-trade-related costs as a line item on the bill is inconsistent with the manner in which all other ongoing costs of operating the utility are reflected on the bill."

I'll have more in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the minister: I introduced Bill 146, the Transparency in Gas Pricing Act, in the hope of bringing greater accountability to the government's cap-and-trade carbon pricing scheme. Speaker,

my legislation will provide much-needed transparency to Ontario's taxpayers and ratepayers, transparency that ratepayers in British Columbia and Quebec already enjoy at no cost to the government.

Speaker, will the minister support my common-sense legislation to make cap-and-trade a separate line item on natural gas bills? And if not, why not?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: We all know where the Common Sense Revolution got us in the past, Mr. Speaker. We're actually going to continue to stand up for the people of Ontario, especially when it comes to the OEB. They know that the OEB regulates the natural gas sector in this province, with a strong mandate to protect the public interest and ensure that consumers receive reliable, cost-effective natural gas service. Their decision on the presentation of cap-and-trade costs was made, as I said before, after extensive consultation within this province.

The opposition claims they support the independence of government agencies, and yet claims we should interfere with the OEB in this case simply because they don't like the decision. Just as the federal government can't dictate terms to the Supreme Court or to the Bank of Canada, or expect that decisions will be in their favour, the Ontario Energy Board will undertake their due diligence and make independent decisions.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Minister, my constituent has a kidney condition. It could be life-threatening and it is definitely painful. Her specialist needs her to have a CAT scan before he can determine the best course of action for her condition. He referred her for a CAT scan in June. In July, she was informed that her appointment for her CAT scan is at the end of January 2018.

Does the minister think that a six-month wait for a diagnostic test is putting patients first? And does he think that it would lead to good patient care?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Of course, as minister, I leave it to our front-line health care professionals—our doctors, nurse practitioners and others—to make the right clinical decision. If there is an urgency to getting a CT scan, I have no doubt that that CT scan can be provided on an urgent basis.

However, we do make every effort to have the shortest or close to the shortest wait times in the entire country. I'm happy to say, when it comes to ultrasound, CT and MRI, we have either the shortest or nearest-to-the-shortest wait times in the country for those procedures. We've made additional investments. In fact, of the \$7 billion of new funds that we put in this year's budget over the next three years for health care, a significant portion of that will go to further reduce wait times, including for diagnostic imaging like CTs, MRIs and the like.

I don't know the circumstances. It seems like a long time. I would hope that the clinician involved is doing the

right thing to make sure that she's getting that at the right time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Speaker, the average wait time he talks about applies to southern Ontario, at 50 days. In northern Ontario, our average wait time is 167 days.

1130

Health Sciences North, our hospital, provides complex treatment to people all across the northeast. Unfortunately, not only are wait times getting longer and longer, but Health Sciences North, like most other large community hospitals in our province, now has hallway medicine as the new normal. The Ontario Hospital Association is warning that overcrowding is leading to a crisis. Even our neonatal units are overcrowded and turning away our sickest of newborn babies.

What will it take for this minister to admit that our hospitals, which used to be the crown jewel of our health care system, are now dangerously close to the breaking point?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, this fiscal year we increased the budget of Health Sciences North by almost \$6 million. Again, in our budget, we allocated more than \$500 million specifically for our hospitals, guaranteeing that every hospital would get at least a 2% increase across the province. On average, the increase to the hospital operating budgets was 3.1%.

We also allocated—which is unprecedented in the history of this province—\$9 billion over the next 10 years in addition to the \$11 billion already committed, for \$20 billion in infrastructure investment, which includes expansion of hospitals, renovations of hospitals and entirely new hospitals.

We're continuing to invest, whether it's in operating costs or in reducing wait times, as I mentioned, \$11 billion, increasing the health budget over the next three years, including for CTs, MRIs, ultrasounds and those important diagnostic procedures.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Sexual violence and harassment have a devastating impact on the lives of survivors and their families. We have made progress as a society when it comes to changing perceptions around this issue, but we all know that we have more work to do.

The Globe and Mail's "Unfounded" series earlier this year shone a spotlight on our country's police services and how cases have been handled. I know that there was a strong will from police services, community groups and government to change things, but my question, Mr. Speaker, through you, is: What actions have been taken by our government?

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you very much to the member from Kingston and the Islands for that important question. First, I want to commend many of our

police services for having taken immediate action on reviewing how they investigate sexual assault cases. However, I want to reserve special thanks for our province's largest police service, the OPP, for their leadership on this issue.

Just last week, the OPP announced that investigative officers will receive new comprehensive training, more supervision and external scrutiny from local survivor support groups. To ensure lasting change, a specialized group of senior officers will personally monitor all unresolved sexual assault cases. There will also be five regional review committees modelled on the highly successful Philadelphia model, where advocates work with survivors and police to ensure thorough investigations. Mr. Speaker, we like the OPP's approach.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I would like to thank the minister for her answer. I would also like to thank the OPP for their leadership on this very important matter. I cannot do so without also acknowledging the Kingston Police and the work that they have done as well in my riding of Kingston and the Islands.

How our law enforcement handles investigations surrounding sexual violence and harassment is a very important part of putting an end to it. Can the minister please speak to what this government and our policing partners are doing to ensure that police have all of the tools that they need and the training to be part of stopping sexual violence and harassment?

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Again I want to say thank you to the member for Kingston and the Islands for her advocacy on these women's issues.

As a woman and a mother of a daughter, I want to once again thank police services that have re-examined their handling of sexual assault cases. My ministry recently invested \$1.8 million to support 15 pilot projects to help ensure survivor-centric and effective investigative approaches for sexual assault cases. This initiative is part of It's Never Okay, our government's groundbreaking action plan to end sexual violence and harassment.

Mr. Speaker, the Basic Constable Training Program at the Ontario Police College now includes survivor-focused and sensitivity components in the curriculum. We know we will see even greater results if our police recruits have more comprehensive training. Ensuring a compassionate police response is one of the many measures our government and our police services are taking to help survivors—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

WATER QUALITY

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. This summer, we've experienced historic rainfalls across Ontario. Many communities have experienced flooding, and our municipal sewer systems were often overwhelmed. As you know, when these heavy rains occur, municipalities are often forced to initiate a bypass at their sewage treatment plants, releasing partially

treated sewage into our local waterways. In 2016, municipalities were forced to bypass more than 6.5 billion litres of partially treated sewage. Will the minister release how many sewage bypasses have occurred in 2017?

Hon. Chris Ballard: Thank you to the member for that question, because water quality is a very important aspect of what we do at the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change. I know we have worked extensively with municipalities across Ontario to address bypass concerns. We're committed to helping municipalities upgrade their infrastructure to separate storm and waste sewage to minimize the sewage discharges.

To be clear, though, Speaker, waste water treatment plants are owned and operated by municipalities, not by the province. That said, the ministry does monitor bypass incidents to confirm that these municipalities have contingency plans to address any discharges at their facilities. We're going to continue to work with these municipalities to make sure that they minimize the number of discharges.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The time for question period is over. There are no deferred votes. Therefore, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1137 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Michael Coteau: While I was in the elevator, I had the opportunity to meet a filmmaker here in Toronto, Paul Stark. Accompanying him today is Georgina Bencsik. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the member from Manitoulin Island.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Algoma-Manitoulin.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Algoma-Manitoulin Island.

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's a beautiful place. Come visit me sometime.

Today, as you've heard, Speaker, there are some drums going on on the grounds. We're having a little powwow today. I want to welcome Chief Stacey Laforme, who is Chief of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation, Linda Broer, Lauren Fong, Tina Stevens, Crystal Sinclair, Warren "Smokey" Thomas, president of OPSEU, and Tim Vining, who are joining me today, along with many others at the powwow.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I am delighted to reinforce the introduction done by the Minister of Children and Youth Services of Paul Stark, who is in fact a constituent. Welcome to Queen's Park. I'd also like to introduce Richard White, who is a principal with PointClickCare, which provides software to the long-term-care industry. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: I also want to welcome to the Legislature Georgina Bencsik, because it's for International Day of Peace that she's here. She's the director of the United Nations Association in Canada. I welcome her from Ottawa to Queen's Park.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I also want to welcome the eagle staffs, the drums, the jingle dancers, the grass dancers and all the people who are assembling for our great celebration that is happening on the grounds today.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further introduction of guests? The member from Algoma-Manitoulin Island.

M. Michael Mantha: Madame la Présidente, je veux—mon frère n'est pas arrivé. Je n'ai pas souvent de la famille, mais mon frère est ici; il est en train de nous rejoindre bientôt. Son nom, c'est Marcel Mantha.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WORLD ALZHEIMER'S DAY

Mr. Bill Walker: As most of you know, today is World Alzheimer's Day. Alzheimer's is a debilitating and irreversible brain disease that robs people of memory, feelings and independence, yet a Canadian is diagnosed with Alzheimer's every five minutes. And it's not just those diagnosed or living with Alzheimer's who suffer; it really hurts the family and their caregivers too.

I can share, on a personal note, that my mother-in-law, Dorothy, is in the early stages, and my Aunt Helen and Uncle Russ have both been afflicted, as well as a number of family friends. It is heart-wrenching to watch how this debilitating disease impacts the person and their family.

It's estimated that caregivers and family spend about 100 hours every month caring for their loved one with everyday tasks, including cooking meals, bathing and dressing them. As this can be quite overwhelming, it's important we give them the proper supports.

The number of people who are diagnosed with dementia is increasing. As baby boomers age, we will witness a dementia crisis within our health care system. While there is, unfortunately, no cure today, all of us want to unite against dementia and to find a cure so we can create a brighter future for all who are impacted by or at risk of Alzheimer's disease and dementia.

I'd like to recognize the Alzheimer Society of Ontario for its dedication in supporting those living with Alzheimer's, their families and their caregivers. As well, I'd like to commend Deborah Barker, recently retired executive director; Stephen Musehl, current executive director; and the staff, board members and volunteers of the Alzheimer Society of Grey-Bruce team whom I've been honoured to support over the past number of years.

The support provided by everyone involved with Alzheimer's is quite remarkable, and we need to offer them our greatest gratitude and thanks.

LOIS SMEDICK

Mr. Percy Hatfield: We in the Windsor area have lost a champion of our local arts, cultural and academic community.

Lois Smedick was an amazing woman who came to the University of Windsor in the 1960s to teach English. She was well known and highly regarded for her passion and commitment to the arts. She was the first female dean at the University of Windsor and a founding member of the Friends of Women's Studies.

Lois chaired the board at Assumption University and was president of the Art Gallery of Windsor for many years. She was a scholar, a volunteer, a donor, a benefactor, a friend and a feminist. When nurse Lori Dupont was murdered at one of our hospitals, Lois Smedick was part of a group of women who fought to change workplace protection laws in Ontario.

Speaker, I last spoke to Lois a few months ago at a concert in Assumption Hall when my first legislative page, Evan Tanovich, was conducting a choir and orchestral piece he wrote, entitled the Assumption Mass. Lois was part of the program. It was so very impressive that evening.

She loved to garden. She was bitten last month by a mosquito, and became the third person from the Windsor area to die from the West Nile virus this year.

It's a sad and tragic ending to a talented individual who gave so much of herself to better our community in so many ways. Rest in peace, Lois, and thank you for everything you've done for the Windsor area.

CITYPLACE

Mr. Han Dong: It's a privilege to represent the riding of Trinity-Spadina. I'm very delighted to speak about yet another great project taking place in my riding.

On September 13, I joined several community members and city officials to break ground at a new multi-use facility next to Canoe Landing Park in CityPlace, also known as Block 31.

What is now earth will become the Bishop Macdonell and Jean Lumb elementary schools, with a combined capacity of 1,100 students. This centre will be a shared facility between the Toronto Catholic and public district school boards. The space is planned to integrate perfectly with Canoe Landing Park to the west, and the roofs will host plentiful green space. Coupled with the schools will be a daycare centre, a facility capable of accommodating 54 children. Coming in fall 2019, this \$67-million structure will serve Toronto's increasingly vertical communities.

I'm proud this project has begun. Not only does our city need more child care facilities, but more opportunities to encourage young families to live, work and stay in CityPlace.

Madam Speaker, Toronto remains a city for all to enjoy, from the youngest child to seniors, and a project like this is great news to my community.

DONALD CROWE

Ms. Laurie Scott: I rise today to pay tribute to Donald John Crowe, a true giant, a gentle giant, from my

riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. He passed away suddenly this month.

Don was the eldest son of the founders of Kawartha Dairy, who started this proud and successful local business in 1937 in Bobcaygeon. Don opened the company's Minden location with the help of his loving wife, Opal, to whom he was married for 51 years. As the patriarch of the family, Don played an important role in the lives of his five sons, 10 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren, and will be dearly missed by everyone who knew him.

I knew Don since I was a young girl. He was literally the friendly milkman delivering milk to your door, then moving to delivering to our family grocery store. Whether it was mentoring local business people or contributing to charitable causes, Don was always ready to help his neighbours. Many business owners will tell stories about Don helping them when they were just starting out, by giving them a fridge or a freezer and telling them to pay him back when they could.

He was everyone's mentor, trusted everyone, had a great sense of humour and a twinkle in his eye. This selflessness was reflected in Don's lifelong membership in the Minden Kinsmen service club, where he was actively involved in serving his community, without ever seeking recognition.

True to form, Don was giving to the very end, having donated his organs to help others.

Don, your family and many friends will miss you but will always appreciate the time they spent with you and remember you whenever they eat Kawartha Dairy ice cream. Rest in peace.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further statements? I recognize the member for Algoma-Manitoulin Island.

WEARING OF PIN

Mr. Michael Mantha: Before I start my statement, I would like to ask consent to wear my Indigenous Circle pin that I have got on. I'm having a little bit of a struggle taking it off.

Mr. Mike Colle: Can we all have one?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I will make sure all members have the pin delivered to them shortly, next week.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Algoma-Manitoulin is seeking unanimous consent to wear the pin. Agreed? Agreed. I hear "Agreed."

I recognize the member.

1310

THINKING ROCK COMMUNITY ARTS

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to everybody for their understanding.

You hear this. If we're quiet just for a little bit, you feel that heartbeat. You feel it. It touches you. And part of that heartbeat was at the Mississauga First Nation Pow Wow Grounds, where it came to life over last weekend

when I was up there on behalf of Thinking Rock Community Arts. A play, a sketch, was organized and created for the good people of central Algoma, from Genaabaaing to Bawating. The play was entitled The Rivers Speak, Giigidowag Ziibik, Les rivières parlent.

The story was about a young boy and his travels through his life from as a child to adulthood to becoming a parent, and the engagement that he had with the colonial people when they came in.

It was a fantastic play, but what was really challenging was how it challenged an individual to think about how important water is to all of us. The message that I took back from this play is that water is life, and we need to remember that.

NAVRATRI

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: On behalf of the Hindu community and the multicultural community of my own riding, Etobicoke North: Hindus across Ontario and the country will be celebrating the auspicious festival of Navratri, the Hindu festival which runs from September 20 to September 30.

Navratri is one of the most significant festivals. It lasts for nine days. Devotees wake up early, bathe and pray to the nine forms of the goddess Durga to seek her divine blessings.

The word "Navratri" itself: "nava," meaning "nine" and "ratri," meaning "night." It's spread over nine nights and 10 days and is one of the most sacred festivals in Hinduism. Devotees, as I mentioned, worship the goddess Durga, or Shakti, which represents the energy of the universe in her many various forms.

The nine most holy days are, of course, a time for celebration, prayers, abstinence from food, and thanking the Almighty for blessings. Navratri, or the nine sacred days, mark the most auspicious days of the lunar calendar according to Hinduism. Speaker, as you will know, being from Scarborough yourself, it is a celebration engaged in by many and varied peoples in Ontario and very, very vigorously.

All of the nine days of the festival are dedicated to each distinct avatar of the goddess and each of these days has a significant colour attached to it.

Speaker, I, along with you and all the members of this House, wish the Hindu community a happy Navratri.

TREETOPS COMMUNITY FOREST

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise in the House today to recognize a dedicated group of constituents whose hard work and progressive vision have given rise to a remarkable community initiative called the Treetops Community Forest.

Since 2015, this group has been actively fundraising to purchase 2.3 acres of natural forest adjacent to Parry Sound's new public school. The land will be used for a naturalized wilderness park, complete with a loop trail named in memory of Fynn Bywater, a local, young

explorer. The park will be open to the community and will also be used by local schools for outdoor education.

Driven by the community, this project saw support from local individuals, businesses and municipalities. Dedicated volunteers helped organize more than a dozen fundraisers. Many of the fundraisers simultaneously promoted active living, such as the Franklin Challenge, which saw more than 80 paddlers complete a 20-kilometre circumnavigation of beautiful Franklin Island on Georgian Bay.

In late August of this year, Treetops Community Forest reached its \$200,000 goal through its last fundraising event, Bike McKellar, which had 40 cyclists registered in three distances.

I stand here today to recognize this unique initiative and heartily commend co-chairs Zack Crafts and Nicole Collins, as well as the entire organizing committee, all of whom have successfully seen this vision through. The Treetops Community Forest is a powerful illustration of how committed individuals can strengthen their entire community and create something that will continue to have an impact long after they're gone.

ROSH HASHANAH

Mr. Mike Colle: Today I rise to recognize the beginning of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. This holiday, also known as the head of the year, began yesterday at sundown and marks the start of the Jewish High Holy Days.

Rosh Hashanah begins the High Holy Days, or 10 Days of Penitence, which end with Yom Kippur. This holiday is celebrated in many ways: lighting candles; festive meals with foods like apples, challah bread dipped in honey and pomegranates seeds; prayer services; and the sounding of the shofar used to call everyone to repentance.

I also want to mention, as I do every year, my good friend Mel Korn and his family as they celebrate Rosh Hashanah. Mel is a son of Holocaust survivors. He, along with many other Holocaust survivors, find this time of year very sensitive, as they reflect back on all their parents, grandparents that were killed during the Shoah and murdered in cold blood. As much as they look ahead to the new year, they look back to see how many of their relatives were never able to experience any new year because of the horrific Shoah that occurred back in the 1930s and 1940s.

So I say to Mel Korn and his family and all the Jewish constituents in my riding and across Ontario: Shana Tova, and may this year ahead be a sweet one.

DURHAM COLLEGE

Mr. Lorne Coe: I rise today to recognize the 50th anniversary of Durham College in my riding. The catalyst for the creation of Durham College occurred in 1967 when the Minister of Education at that time, the Honourable Bill Davis, introduced legislation that established the community college system. Speaker, this

represented a substantial shift in the structure of post-secondary education in Ontario.

On September 18, 1967, Durham College was officially launched, with 205 students across 16 portable classrooms, offering courses such as business or applied arts. Today the college has more than 11,000 full-time apprenticeship and post-secondary students, nearly 800 faculty and staff, and offers 140 academic programs.

This milestone is a remarkable achievement but also a testament to the hard work and vision of the college's students, staff and leadership over its history. Like most community colleges in Ontario, the institution has adapted to the changing times and has striven to offer innovative classes and programs that align with Ontario's labour demand and help narrow the existing skills mismatch.

Here's to another 50 years for Durham College.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I want to thank all members for their statements.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

INDIGENOUS DAY ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR LE JOUR DES AUTOCHTONES

Mr. Mantha moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 156, An Act to proclaim Indigenous Day and make it a holiday / Projet de loi 156, Loi proclamant le jour des Autochtones et faisant de celui-ci un jour férié.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member for a short statement.

Mr. Michael Mantha: It is with great pride, with my tobacco in hand and my friends from the Indigenous Circle, along with OPSEU and Smokey here that have joined us, that June 21 in each year be proclaimed as Indigenous Day.

Indigenous Day will be a public holiday under the Employment Standards Act, 2000. It will be a holiday under the Retail Business Holidays Act. It will be a school holiday under the Education Act. It will be a holiday under the acts and regulations that rely on a definition of holiday in the Legislation Act, 2006. It will be a holiday under regulations that have a provision setting out what a holiday is.

When Indigenous Day falls on a weekend, the following Monday will be the holiday instead—and I introduce it very proudly.

1320

VISITOR

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I believe we have in the House the member from Durham—York, in the 35th Parliament, Lawrence O'Connor.

PETITIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas electricity rates have risen by more than 300% since the current Liberal government took office; and

"Whereas over half of Ontarians' power bills are regulatory and delivery charges and the global adjustment; and

"Whereas the global adjustment is a tangible measure of how much Ontario must overpay for unneeded wind and solar power, and the cost of offloading excess power to our neighbours at a loss; and

"Whereas the market rate for electricity, according to IESO data, has been less than three cents per kilowatt hour to date in 2016, yet the Liberal government's lack of responsible science-based planning has not allowed these reductions to be passed on to Ontarians, resulting in electrical bills several times more than that amount; and

"Whereas the implementation of cap-and-trade will drive the cost of electricity even higher and deny Ontarians the option to choose affordable natural gas heating; and

"Whereas more and more Ontarians are being forced to cut down on essential expenses such as food and medicines in order to pay their increasingly unaffordable electricity bills; and

"Whereas the ill-conceived energy policies of this Liberal government that ignored the advice of independent experts and government agencies, such as the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) and the independent electrical system operator (IESO), and are not based on science have resulted in Ontarians' electricity costs rising, despite lower natural gas costs and increased energy conservation in the province;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take immediate steps to reduce the total cost of electricity paid for by Ontarians, including costs associated with power consumed, the global adjustment, delivery charges, administrative charges, tax and any other charges added to Ontarians' energy bills."

I fully support this, affix my name and send it with page Charlotte.

ANTI-SMOKING INITIATIVES FOR YOUTH

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to recognize Christine Neville from Levack in my riding for signing this petition with thousands of other people. It reads as follows:

"Whereas in the past 10 years in Ontario, 86% of all movies with on-screen smoking were rated for youth, and the tobacco industry has a well-documented history of promoting tobacco use on-screen; and

"Whereas a scientific report released by the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit estimated that 185,000 children in Ontario today will be recruited to smoking by exposure to on-screen smoking, and more than 59,000 will eventually die from tobacco-related diseases, incurring at least \$1.1 billion in health care costs; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has a stated goal to achieve the lowest smoking rates in Canada, and 79% of Ontarians support not allowing smoking in movies rated G, PG, and 14A (increased from 73% in 2011);

"Whereas the Minister of Government and Consumer Services has the authority to amend the regulations of the Film Classification Act via cabinet;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"To examine the ways in which the regulations of the Film Classification Act could be amended to reduce smoking in youth-rated films released in Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Cole to bring it to the table.

DENTAL CARE

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a petition here signed by hundreds of members of my community of Beaches–East York. It relates to dental health in Ontario.

"Whereas lack of access to dental care affects overall health and well-being, and poor oral health is linked to diabetes, cardiovascular, respiratory disease, and Alzheimer's disease; and

"Whereas it is estimated that two to three million people in Ontario have not seen a dentist in the past year, mainly due to the cost of private dental services; and

"Whereas approximately every nine minutes a person in Ontario arrives at a hospital emergency room with a dental problem but can only get painkillers and antibiotics, and this costs the health care system at least \$31 million annually with no treatment of the problem;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to invest in public oral health programs for low-income adults and seniors by:

"—ensuring that plans to reform the health care system include oral health so that vulnerable people in our communities have equitable access to the dental care they need to be healthy;

"—extending public dental programs for low-income children and youth within the next two years to include low-income adults and seniors; and

"—delivering public dental services in a cost-efficient way through publicly funded dental clinics such as public health units, community health centres and aboriginal health access centres to ensure primary oral health services are accessible to vulnerable people in Ontario."

I fully support this petition, sign my name and send it down to the table with Alessandro.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition with regard to provincial Highway 559. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas provincial Highway 559 is the main artery for the majority of the township of Carling and the only access to the extremely popular Killbear Provincial Park, which had more than 315,000 visitors in 2016; and

“Whereas the decision to downgrade Highway 559 from asphalt to a tar and chip treatment has greatly increased long-standing concerns regarding safety; and

“Whereas traffic includes many large vehicles such as RVs, trailers and heavy maintenance vehicles with which cyclists and pedestrians are currently forced to share the highway due to lack of safer options; and

“Whereas in its current state provincial Highway 559 has many dangerous sightlines and has been plagued by long-standing maintenance issues, including but not limited to improper application of surface treatments;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The Legislative Assembly of Ontario request the Ministry of Transportation redesign provincial Highway 559 with safe sightlines and rebuild it with an asphalt surface and bike lanes.”

I fully support this petition and will give it to Duncan.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank the Family Council Network, region 4 for gathering these petitions. It reads as follows:

“Whereas chronic understaffing is the number one concern of families and friends of residents in long-term care;

“Whereas the Long-Term Care Homes Act (2007) empowers the provincial government to create a minimum care standard—but falls short of actually creating one;

“Whereas current care levels fail to recognize the increased levels of sickness and rates of Alzheimer’s and dementia of LTC residents;

“Whereas the most detailed and reputable studies of minimum care standards recommend at least” 4.1 hours “of direct care per day;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“(1) Amend the Long-Term Care Homes Act (2007) so that a long-term-care home will have to provide its residents with a minimum of four hours a day of nursing and personal support services, averaged across the residents;

“(2) Calculate the average number of direct hours of nursing services and personal support services as prescribed by the regulations and exclude hours paid in respect to vacation, statutory holidays, sick leave, leaves of absences and training time;

“(3) Increase funding to long-term-care homes so they can achieve the mandated staffing and care standard and tie public funding for them to the provision of quality care and staffing levels that meet the legislated minimum care standard;

“(4) Make public reporting of staffing levels at each Ontario LTC home mandatory to ensure accountability.”

I support the Family Council Network for their work. I affix my name to it and ask Eva to bring it to the Clerk.

BRUCE POWER

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Bruce Power provides 30% of Ontario’s electricity production at 30% below the average cost to generate residential power;

“Whereas extending the operational life of the Bruce Power energy units will ensure families and businesses have long-term, low-cost stability and clean air to breathe;

“Whereas the Life-Extension Program (LEP) will secure an estimated 22,000 jobs and an additional 3,000 to 5,000 jobs annually throughout the investment program, injecting billions into Ontario’s economy;

“Whereas BWXT contributes approximately 1,000 high-skilled, high-paying jobs to residents of Cambridge, Peterborough, Toronto, Arnprior and Dundas and their surrounding areas;

“Whereas BWXT generates over \$90 million in payroll and procures over \$100 million in Ontario goods and services annually across its five major operating locations in Ontario;

“Whereas BWXT contributes back over \$50,000 annually to worthy charitable organizations and celebrates a strong engineering co-op program to support the mentorship and development of local engineering students;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To support the vital role that nuclear power plays in delivering clean, affordable electricity while contributing to a prosperous, well-employed regional economy and across the province.”

I agree with this, I affix my signature to it and send it with page Emerson.

ANTI-SMOKING INITIATIVES FOR YOUTH

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas:

“—In the past 10 years in Ontario, 86% of all movies with on-screen smoking were rated for youth;

“—The tobacco industry has a long, well-documented history of promoting tobacco use on-screen;

“—A scientific report released by the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit estimated that 185,000 children in Ontario today will be recruited to smoking by exposure to on-screen smoking;

“—More than 59,000 will eventually die from tobacco-related cancers, strokes, heart disease and emphysema, incurring at least \$1.1 billion in health care

costs; and whereas an adult rating (18A) for movies that promote on-screen tobacco in Ontario would save at least 30,000 lives and half a billion health care dollars;

“—The Ontario government has a stated goal to achieve the lowest smoking rates in Canada;

“—79% of Ontarians support not allowing smoking in movies rated G, PG, 14A (increased from 73% in 2011);

“—The Minister of Government and Consumer Services has the authority to amend the regulations of the Film Classification Act via cabinet;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“—To request the Standing Committee on Government Agencies examine the ways in which the regulations of the Film Classification Act could be amended to reduce smoking in youth-rated films released in Ontario;

“—That the committee report back on its findings to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and that the Minister of Government and Consumer Services prepare a response.”

I fully support it, affix my name and send it with page Rachel.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Stephen Gauvin from Chelmsford, in my riding. These petitions come from the northeast. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the residents of northern Ontario, particularly people who are sick or elderly, depend on public transportation for appointments in southern Ontario;

“Whereas intercity bus routes have been eliminated by Greyhound, for example, all daytime routes between Sudbury and Ottawa; and

“Whereas there have been serious reductions at Ontario Northland, including the elimination of Northland’s train services;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“Ensure that Ontario Northland offers adequate and equitable intercity transportation service from northern to southern Ontario.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Eva to bring it to the table.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Han Dong: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Cambridge, Ontario, is a municipality of over 125,000 people, many of whom commute into the greater Toronto area daily;

“Whereas the current commuting options available for travel between the Waterloo region and the GTA are inefficient and time-consuming, as well as environmentally damaging;

“Whereas the residents of Cambridge and the Waterloo region believe that they would be well-served by commuter rail transit that connects the region to the

Milton line, and that this infrastructure would have positive, tangible economic benefits to the province of Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Direct crown agency Metrolinx to commission a feasibility study into building a rail line that connects the city of Cambridge to the GO train station in Milton, and to complete this study in a timely manner and communicate the results to the municipal government of Cambridge.”

I support this petition. I sign it and give it to page Michael.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the current government under Premier Kathleen Wynne is calling for the sale of up to 60% of Hydro One shares into private ownership; and

“Whereas the decision to sell the public utility was made without any public input and the deal will continue to be done in complete secrecy; and

“Whereas the loss of majority ownership in Hydro One will force ratepayers to accept whatever changes the new owners decide, such as higher rates; and

“Whereas electricity rates are already sky-high and hurting family budgets as well as businesses; and

“Whereas ratepayers will never again have independent investigations of consumer complaints, such as the Ontario Ombudsman’s damning report on failed billing; and

“Whereas the people of Ontario are the true owners of Hydro One and they do not believe the fire sale of Hydro One is in their best interest;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To protect Ontario ratepayers by stopping the sale of Hydro One.”

I fully support it, affix my name and send it with page Duncan.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank the Family Council Network, region 4 for gathering these petitions. It reads as follows:

“Whereas chronic understaffing is the number one concern of families and friends of residents in long-term care;

“Whereas the Long-Term Care Homes Act (2007) empowers the provincial government to create a minimum care standard—but falls short of actually creating one;

“Whereas current care levels fail to recognize the increased levels of sickness and rates of Alzheimer’s and dementia of LTC residents;

"Whereas the most detailed and reputable studies of minimum care standards recommend at least" 4.1 hours "of direct care per day;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) Amend the Long-Term Care Homes Act (2007) so that a long-term-care home will have to provide its residents with a minimum of four hours a day of nursing and personal support services, averaged across the residents...;

"(2) Calculate the average number of direct hours of nursing services and personal support services as prescribed by the regulations and exclude hours paid in respect to vacation, statutory holidays, sick leave, leaves of absences and training time;

"(3) Increase funding to long-term-care homes so they can achieve the mandated staffing and care standard and tie public funding for them to the provision of quality care and staffing levels that meet the legislated minimum care standard;

"(4) Make public reporting of staffing levels at each Ontario LTC home mandatory to ensure accountability."

I support the Family Council Network for their work. I affix my name to it and ask Eva to bring it to the Clerk.

WATER QUALITY

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas water has become a critical resource to the citizens of Ontario, and pressures are growing to make it a commodity to be traded for profit;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure that free access to clean water remains a guaranteed public good for all citizens of this province."

I sign this petition, and I leave it with Nicola to bring to the table.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

TRANSPARENCY IN GAS PRICING ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE DANS LA FACTURATION DU GAZ

Mr. McNaughton moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 146, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 to provide transparency in gas pricing / Projet de loi 146, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario pour assurer la transparence dans la facturation du gaz.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I am pleased to bring forward a common-sense bill with broad support this afternoon. Bill 146, the Transparency in Gas Pricing Act, would simply require natural gas distributors to clearly show the cost of cap-and-trade on customers' bills. Transparency in taxes and fees is necessary to hold politicians accountable.

Bill 146 is about common sense and basic fairness. This is an idea that has been supported by consumers, gas distributors, the Auditor General, school boards, hospitals, even the former Liberal Minister of Energy. Voting for this bill would be an opportunity for the government side to support making cap-and-trade the transparent and accountable program that they promised the people of Ontario.

Currently, the cost of cap-and-trade is lumped into the delivery charge on natural gas bills. By hiding this cost from families and businesses, the government is not only failing to be accountable for the money they're taking out of people's pockets, but also failing to show the cost of emissions. This is an inconsistent policy in every way possible. It is inconsistent within Canada, where British Columbia and Quebec disclose the cost as a separate line item. It is also inconsistent within Ontario's own energy sector, where fuel vendors not regulated by the OEB, such as propane and oil providers, have a separate line item for these costs.

When asked about disclosing cap-and-trade costs for natural gas in the past, the former Minister of Energy, the member for Ottawa West–Nepean, said that the OEB represents "the interests of consumers in this province.... I have trouble believing that the Ontario Energy Board would not, in every instance, be 100% transparent with the public."

Since then, however, the Liberal government has gone back time and time again to the tired talking point that this was a decision by the Ontario Energy Board, an arm's-length organization, and that government won't interfere by issuing a ministerial directive to fix it. It's an excuse that is hard to credit once you dig a little and find that this government has issued nearly 100 ministerial directives to date, yet they won't issue one in this case. They won't take responsibility for the proper implementation of a program they designed and put into operation.

1340

The cap-and-trade program is a difficult one for everyday people and families to understand. By nature, it's not a very transparent way to price emissions. I know I've spoken with countless small and medium-sized business owners who have had to throw all kinds of money and other resources at trying to get a handle on it. This program is challenging enough for families and businesses to grapple with; we owe them at least this basic level of disclosure.

When you buy something at a store, you will see a full breakdown of costs. If you bought a barbecue, for instance, at Home Hardware, you would see the HST, delivery charge, assembly charge, all as separate line items. Is the bottom-line cost important? Absolutely, but

so is knowing what you're paying for. It's a level of accountability that consumers assume will be there. By not disclosing cap-and-trade in the same way, the government is abusing the people's trust.

The Auditor General was very clear in her recommendation that to ensure that people have a clear understanding of the impact on them of cap-and-trade, the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change should ensure that communications to the public are open and transparent.

I brought forward this bill to enable the House to fix this through legislation and a vote. It is unquestionably the will of the vast majority. In addition to ratepayers from across Ontario, organizations as varied as the Public Interest Advocacy Centre, the Industrial Gas Users Association, the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, Colleges Ontario and even gas distributors such as Enbridge and Union Gas have advocated for this measure.

Madam Speaker, if I wanted to read you a sentence or two from everyone who advocated for this to the OEB, I'd be here all afternoon, so I'd like to read what just a handful of the dozens of concerned groups and individuals had to say.

The Independent Electricity System Operator has said, "While the IESO acknowledges that a customer's overall gas bill is likely of most interest to customers, the IESO notes that the board has a statutory mandate to (a) promote communication within the gas industry and the education of consumers; and (b) promote energy conservation and energy efficiency. These statutory objectives, in the IESO's view, are furthered by having a customer clearly know and understand that there is a carbon cost to their natural gas usage. A separate line item makes this clear, and quantifies that cost for consumers. Burying the customer-related GHG charge in the delivery charge does the opposite. Armed with better information and a clear price signal for the carbon costs associated with their gas usage, a customer should be able to make more informed decisions regarding energy conservation and efficiency measures."

I think that this is right on the money. The whole point of this program, we're told by the government, is to send a price signal that emissions should be avoided. Burying this cost prevents ratepayers from being able to see this program at all, let alone make a comparison of costs of emissions if they're making decisions about fuel usage.

The president of Weyerhaeuser Co. Ltd. seems to agree. He submitted to the Ontario Energy Board that including "the cost of allowances and other administrative costs in the delivery charge for natural gas seems contrary to helping consumers understand the cost of carbon. One would think that we should be encouraging transparency, not making it more difficult to understand actual emission-related costs."

Trish Fournier, the CEO of Lake Erie Farms, said, "I was dismayed to learn this week that the OEB staff is recommending that the cost to consumers regarding cap-and-trade not be displayed separately on our energy bills.

In my opinion, taxpayers, consumers and voters should be fully aware of how government policies are affecting both themselves personally and their businesses."

I fully agree with Ms. Fournier. Taxpayers deserve to know how government policies are working. If money is leaving people's pockets and flowing to government, people deserve to know why and how.

A recent Fraser report estimated that the average taxpayer is losing 42% of their income to taxes—42%, Madam Speaker. As an elected representative and a taxpayer, I find that unbelievable. It underscores why we need a fair and simple tax system, which is one of the most basic duties of government. Instead, this Liberal government continues to build a system of taxes and fees that is deceitful and confusing. It is creating resentment not only for the costs, but also for the deceptive way that they're collected.

The London Property Management Association was clear that they think burying this cost is not only unfair but is kneecapping the program itself: "Ratepayers cannot be expected to react positively to the cost of GHG and look for ways to reduce their own emissions if they do not know what the cost to them of these emissions are included in their bills. Indeed, LPMA submits that the vast majority of ratepayers would not even be aware that they are paying additional amounts for a cap-and-trade system if this cost is not identified as a separate line item on the bill."

Colleges Ontario had a similarly practical rationale for advocating a separate line item. They submitted to the OEB that: "As utility customers, colleges are recommending that, for purposes of transparency as well as comparability for cost tracking against previous years, that these new costs associated with the cap-and-trade program be aggregated and shown as a separate line item on all utility bills."

The CFO of the Hamilton Port Authority said, "As a customer it should be shown as a separate line item on our invoice, rather than have it buried in delivery or other charges. If our gas bills go up and if it is significant, we need to understand the reason for the increase."

St. Joseph's Care Group of Thunder Bay said: "Masking the cap-and-trade costs into the delivery and transportation charges essentially hides the procurement costs from consumers. This makes it difficult for natural gas users to track their own emission profile, and also goes against the spirit of transparency promised by the OEB. Rolling these costs into existing line items also make it more difficult for consumers to hold the gas utilities accountable to optimizing their carbon procurement costs."

If all this testimony sounds redundant, that's because it is. This is a straightforward issue with an easy, common-sense answer. There is simply no reasonable justification for burying these costs. If the only excuse the government can find to ignore the overwhelming support for this measure is their desire to be deferential to the OEB, I think that should really give the government members in this House pause. Remember, this could be

fixed with a ministerial directive, which this government has issued almost 100 of already. But the Minister of Energy won't stand up for our constituents, for the families and businesses who are paying these costs. That is why we need to do that here today.

In a survey of natural gas ratepayers, which was commissioned by the Auditor General, 89% of respondents said that it's important to disclose the impact of cap-and-trade on natural gas bills. How often do we get a chance to vote for a simple measure with 89% support? That is what I'm asking you to do today: Vote for this bill and fix a simple problem that constituents across the province clearly want dealt with.

The people of this province are frustrated. They're sick of politics as usual and politicians operating under a veil of secrecy. They're at the end of their rope with deleted emails, hush-hush grants to corporations on an invitation-only basis and hidden fees. It's the job of the opposition to hold the government accountable, and that's what this bill is about. I hope the government will step up and take responsibility for the implementation of their cap-and-trade program by joining me to support this bill to give constituents a measure of the accountability they deserve and the transparency they were promised.

We must all be on the side of the families and businesses that pay the bills in the province of Ontario. I urge all members to join with the opposition PC caucus in supporting Bill 146 today.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate? I recognize the member from Hamilton Mountain.

Mr. Paul Miller: Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you; sorry, Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to discuss Bill 146, the Transparency in Gas Pricing Act.

As I'm sure we all are aware, this bill, in short, will make it so that gas distributors will be required to prominently show on a customer's invoice the exact portion of charges attributed to Ontario's cap-and-trade program.

Today I want to focus my attention on two key points: outlining the practical benefits of this bill, as well as discussing the reason we need to be skeptical of Conservative legislation surrounding Ontario's cap-and-trade system.

To lead off, I would like to say that, yes, this is a practical bill that should be implemented. It gives customers more transparency when it comes to their gas invoices. When you really think about it, it's always beneficial for there to be full transparency on financial statements. The way I see it, it's similar to shopping at a grocery store. If at the end of your shop, you received a final bill that only had listed the grand total of your purchases and not the cost of each item, you would be justifiably upset. There would be no way for you to confirm that the correct amount was charged for each item, no way for you to determine that the final charge was fair.

1350

Essentially, Bill 146 is all about making sure that your gas bill is fair. It gives the customer a better understanding of the breakdown of the charges they may have incurred, thus giving them the power to confirm these charges are correct.

The relevance of Bill 146 is accentuated in many ways by a story from CBC's Go Public, which surfaced earlier this year. In January, several residents living outside the Calgary area complained of discrepancies on a funeral bill they had received. All were shocked to find an unexpectedly high \$100 carbon tax associated with a cremation fee. Of course, this was a mistake on the part of the funeral home responsible for the cremation. Later, it was determined that the correct charge was only \$10.09, off by a decimal point.

There are some particular facts in this story that are not directly transferable to our discussion here; however, this Canadian case does establish a need for transparency when it comes to levies for cap-and-trade. Without this type of transparency, without a separate line on gas bills that makes explicit the amount spent on the cap-and-trade levy, there is no way for Ontario residents to know if they are being placed in a similar situation. To maintain the credibility and fairness of the cap-and-trade system, Bill 146 should be supported.

With that said, there's another side to the coin that must be laid out in full for the House: that while rigorously ensuring the cap-and-trade taxation system is fair, effective and transparent, we must also make sure that the original purpose of the cap-and-trade system is upheld. I, along with my NDP colleagues, supported Bill 172, which allowed for the implementation of the cap-and-trade system in Ontario. We supported this measure because we believe that climate change is real, a fact that should not be dismissed because it's convenient to do so. Whenever I hear a Conservative talk about our cap-and-trade system, I fear that the end goal might be to reverse the developments that have accumulated.

It wasn't so long ago—about a year, in fact—that Progressive Conservatives were filibustering Ontario's cap-and-trade legislation, trying to delay it so that it would not become law. This party's history of detest for our new cap-and-trade system is in line with their newest proposal to defund the climate change action plan and use cap-and-trade revenue instead to hand out tax cuts to their friends. That is counterintuitive to the whole plan. With that proposal, the accomplishments that our province has made on the climate change front would be reversed.

In summary, I think it is important to make clear that this legislation takes us down the right path towards transparency, credibility and fairness in regard to our natural gas bills. However, we must not forget that these changes should not be made in spite over our province's climate change objectives. They must be made in conjunction with them, not against them.

We will be supporting this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Arthur Potts: It certainly gives me great pleasure to have this opportunity to respond to the member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex on his private member's bill, Bill 146, transparency in gas pricing.

What makes it particularly a pleasure for me, as I sit on this side of the House as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, is that I am finally seeing movement from the members of the opposition party. They are actually addressing a climate change plan, and this is it. They're concerned with the paperwork. They are not concerned with the broader issues, as the member from Hamilton West—

Mr. Paul Miller: East.

Mr. Arthur Potts: —East—mentions. It's another filibuster move. It's another stake in the heart of the objectives that we're trying to move forward—to move in a concise way against climate change in the province by putting a price on carbon. What we're seeing here is a bit of a plan coming forward which, as I say, seems to be more paperwork rather than substance.

We've heard on the other side some inkling that they may want to adopt something in the order of a tax-on-dividends scheme à la the BC plan, but they are not committing to it. In fact, over six months ago, the Leader of the Opposition did commit to bringing forward his energy plan in the next few weeks. Over six months later—200 days—we're still waiting for it.

I was on a wonderful radio show with my good friend Jerry Agar not too long ago, with Alex Pierson, who is an adviser to the Leader of the Opposition. She was on with me, and it became very clear that, "No, no, we're not going to have an energy plan at all until we have our broad consultation with the members of the Conservative Party of the province of Ontario at our policy convention," which I think is in November. But we're already getting some leakage in advance of the policy convention of what they're going to do, and it looks like they're concerned about the optics around this.

Let's be very clear that this is not a decision we took, Speaker. This was a decision of the Ontario Energy Board, which did go on a broad consultation to assess the best way to put the pricing of carbon that was coming forward into the system. They concluded that it was not necessary to break out the charges associated with the cap-and-trade program in the energy bill.

One of the easiest reasons, you should all recognize, was to keep the bill simple: that it's all part of the infrastructure, and the cost of the delivery of the gas is built in. We're not applying a tax or carbon pricing to the utility that's delivering; they're passing on the cost that they're getting from the supplier. That's where the carbon pricing is applied. They are just passing through those costs, as they do on the cost of the energy that is being supplied—typically, now more than ever in Ontario, from fracked gas from the United States. They're just passing on a cost that's part of the cost associated with the product that they have here.

The member talked about a price signal. And he's absolutely right that, with a cap-and-trade program, we

are attaching a price signal. But the price of carbon is not the pricing that we put on the carbon; the price of carbon is the entire cost associated with using that gas. It is a bottom-line cost, including taxation, including the HST component. It is a bottom-line consideration. Do I spend this much per cubic metre of gas, or do I avoid that and take a bicycle, or heat with ground-source heat? That's the price signal. The messaging is based on the cost associated within the bill, as opposed to one smaller line item.

Let me reinforce that it is a very small component of an overall bill, in the order of maybe \$20 on an average bill. That's so incredibly important—because we do have a plan on this side of the House, and I'm very proud of the plan that we have. I'm very proud of the previous Minister of Environment and Climate Change, who has now resigned. He is off at the Pembina Institute, and I wish him so well because he'll bring some of that visionary action that he had bringing forth our legislation to a much broader audience around the world, starting out of Alberta. I'm so proud of Glen Murray—and our Premier—for having the courage to do what I think is the most significant piece of legislation that we'll bring forward in this whole term of office, because it is visionary. What we are doing in this bill will be affecting Ontarians for generations to come. It's not about the next year or the next election cycle. This is long-term visioning and I'm extraordinarily proud of it on this side of the House.

I have the Citizens' Climate Lobby, which is very active in my riding of Beaches—East York. They come in to see me on a regular basis—Cheryl McNamara and others—and they're a very thoughtful group of people. They're concerned about the neutrality of the system to make it saleable. Let's be very clear: What we are doing in Ontario is a carbon-pricing-neutral program. We do have the cost associated with natural gas in the gas that's being used, and the cost associated with driving your car with petrol is embedded in the fuel cost of driving your car. But all the proceeds from that are going into programs that are specifically outlined in the legislation; they must go to programs that are reducing carbon. We can predict the carbon reductions we're getting because we are investing directly and using the monies that are raised through our cap-and-trade auctions for exactly the purpose of reducing carbon in the province of Ontario.

We've just come through our third auction. I know the members of the opposition must be reeling in disbelief that it has been so successful, that the Liberals would have got something so right, that our third auction—over half a billion dollars—increased expectations. And every penny of the money raised through these auctions is going to really important programs to help people in the province of Ontario: retrofitting your homes; driving electric vehicles; business programs to take the carbon out of a smokestack of a cement kiln and mix it with hydrogen to make liquid natural gas, for instance. This is the circular economy at work: \$1.9 billion predicted in the first year to be put to direct carbon-reducing programs. I'm very proud of that.

1400

Trying to direct the OEB on such a minor piece of the equation is something so minuscule and so insignificant that I'm not going to support it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to rise in support of Bill 146. The bill before us stems from the Auditor General's 2016 annual report. In section 3 of that report, the Auditor General outlined findings from a value-for-money audit of the Liberal government's actions related to climate change. Sixteen recommendations were made by the Auditor General to the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change, as well as the government at large.

The proposed measures in Bill 146 are designed to ensure that the government adequately addresses the recommendations. To ensure that Ontarians have a clear understanding of the impact on them of cap-and-trade, the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change should ensure that its communications to the public are open and transparent and explain clearly how it plans to meet its targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, including all costs to Ontarians associated with implementing the system.

During the Auditor General's audit process, a survey was conducted of natural gas ratepayers, and 89% of the respondents said it was important to disclose the financial impact of cap-and-trade policies on their natural gas bills. In conjunction, the Auditor General found that 75 of the 80 stakeholder groups who interact with the Ontario Energy Board also supported the disclosure of cap-and-trade costs on invoices and bills. This is precisely what the proposed measures in Bill 146 seek to accomplish: transparency and openness.

The bill would amend the Ontario Energy Board Act to require that every natural gas distributor who issues an invoice for supplying gas to a consumer must clearly show all the costs to the consumer associated with compliance obligations under the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act, 2016. Ultimately, this bill responds to the demands from Ontario consumers, who are tired of paying more on their hydro bills due to this Liberal government's bungling of the energy portfolio.

While the Liberal government continues to make Ontarians work harder, pay more and get less, the very least the government could do is offer transparency and openness to families and businesses on their hydro bills.

What's clear is that the cap-and-trade scheme implemented by the Liberal government is too complex and does not openly disclose the line cost impacts on ratepayers and business owners. There's a precedent here as well. Both Quebec and British Columbia include the cost of carbon pricing as a separate line item on their customers' bills.

In closing, Speaker, the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus is always supportive of measures that increase transparency and openness for consumers and ratepayers in Ontario. We owe them no less.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House and speak on the issues of the day, particularly on Thursday afternoons. It's actually my favourite afternoon in the House because we speak to private members' bills. They are often partisan, but they're always driven by individual members and their perspectives on how things should run.

This one, the Transparency in Gas Pricing Act, basically to force the OEB to get natural gas companies to list the price of cap-and-trade on their bills, makes sense. It makes sense. It is open and transparent and, in the long run, it will increase accountability.

I always find it interesting listening to members defending each side of their political spectrum. The member from Beaches-East York talked about the money that the cap-and-trade auctions were raising. We voted in favour of cap-and-trade. But the big red flag that we waved with cap-and-trade was the total lack of accountability for where this money was actually going to be spent. You can spend money on almost any program and say it's for cap-and-trade, but you don't know exactly how efficient that spend will be, or how efficient that spend will be to eliminating carbon. They subsidize electric cars. Is that a bad thing? No. But do we for sure know that the subsidization of electric cars is the best way to remove carbon out of the atmosphere? We don't, because the government has been very reluctant to actually put a calculation in place that if we spend a million dollars, we should be able to take this much carbon out of the atmosphere—because then the decisions will be different.

If you bring that back, if the people who are paying the cap-and-trade fees—and whether it's a fee passed down from the supplier or whether it's a tax doesn't really make much difference. It makes no difference to the end-user. If John and Joe and Jane and Barb Public are talking to me in my riding and I say, "Oh no, this isn't actually a tax. It's a fee administered by the government," that's no different, Speaker, to the people out there. That's no different. But if they continue to see that, then they are going to continue to ask us questions to make sure, whether we're on the government side or the opposition side, that we are held accountable for where that money actually goes. That's why I believe that the true costs of any program should be visible on the bill to the end consumer.

The idea that you have to keep the bill very simplistic because your average consumer isn't smart enough to read the bill—I don't buy that at all. The other argument that I don't buy is, "Well, we shouldn't force them to list it because it doesn't cost that much." I remember—and I believe it was a former Minister of Energy—when we were talking about how much the gas plant scandal was going to cost: "Oh, it's just a cup of coffee." It's that attitude that causes not only governments and governing parties trouble—who it causes trouble in the end is the people of Ontario, because it's their money that is wasted

and their future, their children's future that is squandered with that attitude: "We don't have to worry about it because it's not that much money. And look how great our plan is. But we don't want to be held accountable for that plan."

A very good example of how this government likes to talk about their plans but how they dislike—actually disdain—accountability is their plan to sell off Hydro One. You can agree or disagree; we totally disagree with the idea of selling off Hydro One. But the first thing this accountability-driven government did when they initiated that plan was to take away the powers of the Auditor General and the Financial Accountability Office over Hydro One. That's the first thing they did. Those are non-partisan accountability officers. Let's call them accountability officers. So the first thing you're going to do on a plan is take away accountability.

When I hear a member from the opposite side say, "It's just a little bit of money; we shouldn't list that," that waves a big danger sign to me and to us.

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We agree with cap-and-trade, but we fully agree that those costs should be accountable to the people who are paying them. Also, the results of where that money is going and how much it's actually doing to achieving the goals set out—that should also be accountable.

The government is unwilling to be accountable on the consumer end and unwilling to be accountable on the program delivery end. So despite how good they claim their plans are, there is a very big chance that the program will not be nearly as effective as they claim.

We disagree with a lot of the other Tory plans on energy—mainly because no one knows what they are. But other than that, we support this bill.

I'm happy to end on that note.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's a pleasure to stand and to have a discussion about a proposal put forth by someone who, I have to say, is a friend of mine, the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, and someone whose company I very much enjoy. Let's talk about his proposal in terms of offering some suggestions, some advice and a bit of a critique.

Speaker, the first issue that the Legislature ought to have with the member's proposed bill, and it's a fundamental one, is that it's actually outside the scope of the Legislature. The decision about what is and is not on electricity and gas bills isn't made here in this particular room. It's not a decision made by MPPs. It's a decision made by the Ontario Energy Board, or the OEB. The OEB is an independent and, most importantly, arms-length regulator for the energy sector. Think of it as, this is the court system for the energy sector. So in simple terms, the member's proposed bill is much the same as dictating to the courts or the police on how to manage the process of law enforcement or the administration of justice, and to do so in the context of energy decisions. To override an existing decision by the OEB on how to

present the costs of capping emissions on consumer's bills is essentially to challenge the independence of a body specifically established to prevent the adjudication of energy policy from being made on an ad hoc, issue-specific basis right here on the floor of this Legislature. He's proposing doing exactly what the OEB was set up to prevent.

To do what the member's bill proposes is bad energy policy. It's bad politics. The member will be awfully sorry if his bill is a success. It's an ill-conceived idea.

Interjections.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Remember, I like the guy.

I'm just offering you some advice here. I think you should take it.

One could ask, "Why do it at all," or in specific terms, "What difference would it make if it were a success?"

Will it affect the consumption of natural gas? Probably not.

Will it promote or enhance conservation of energy? This is an interesting point. His statement never mentioned "conservation"; he never said the word. The member's own words say clearly that conservation is not an objective of the bill.

Will it lead to better distribution of natural gas in Ontario? I think we can conclusively say no to that.

Currently, the charge to recover the greenhouse gas emissions is included in the delivery line on natural gas bills. The Ontario Energy Board made a ruling that cap-and-trade costs are part of doing business in delivering natural gas to homes and businesses.

If the member wants to accord special treatment to one component of the cost of doing business, then why not do it with others, as well? For example, why not have a line item that shows the cost of labour or executive salaries on the gas bill? Or the cost of building gas storage? Or the cost of building pipelines? Or the cost of office equipment—all in separate lines on the gas bill? Except, of course, that research conducted for the OEB and for the province conclusively shows that people want simpler bills, not more complicated bills. If the member's bill were a success and people looked at their bills, somebody would say, "Well, what about that line? Is there anything you can do about it?" And they would say, "Nope, there's nothing you can do about it." "Then why isn't it folded into the cost of delivery"—which is exactly what the OEB suggested.

If business pricing is to be consistent, then natural gas companies should treat the cost of doing business the same in every sector. They should treat it the same in natural gas or groceries or home building or public transit—everything.

If the member's bill, then, sounds unnecessary and infeasible, it could be because it is unnecessary and infeasible. So why would it be proposed? Well, you ask yourself: Do you believe in climate change or not? If you don't believe in climate change, you'll do everything you can to present it as a never-ending form of water-dripping torture. You either believe in the independence of the

OEB or you don't. And if you believe in it, then you respect its decisions or you don't.

Speaker, there is no point to this bill, which is why I will oppose it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to join the debate today on Bill 146 from the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, who has been known, I think, as one of the leaders in accountability and transparency here in this assembly—as well as working to ensure that our economy remains strong.

My dear friend and colleague from Whitby–Oshawa asked me before I stood up to make sure I could straighten out our friend the member from Mississauga–Streetsville on a few things that he said.

I must say that this is a common-sense bill. It aims to provide more transparency on our already complicated hydro bills—the ones we receive and that have been going up and going up and going up in recent years. We know that the Auditor General supports this type of legislation. We know that our hospitals and our schools across Ontario support this type of legislation. We know that people have become disillusioned with energy pricing in the province of Ontario and that we need to know, in order to understand these bills, what we're actually paying for.

If the member opposite wants to talk about itemization on our hydro bills or our natural gas bills, I would suggest that we do that. Let's see how much those cancelled gas plants actually cost each and every ratepayer in Ontario. We should know what cap-and-trade is going to cost Ontarians in each and every hydro bill. We should find out what the distribution costs, the transmission costs—all of the different cancellations and all of the different boondoggles that we've seen. I think my constituents in Nepean–Carleton, and perhaps in the greater, broader city of Ottawa, would really appreciate knowing exactly what kind of money this government is taking in on their hydro bills and where they're spending it.

Speaker, I think the best thing that we can do as a Legislature is provide openness and transparency for all of our constituents on their hydro bills, on their natural gas bills, and every other piece and itemization list that we have.

That is all the time I have today to speak in support of my colleague from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. I do urge the members opposite to reconsider their lack of support for something so basic.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: It's great to join the debate too, and I would also like to set my friend from Mississauga–Streetsville straight on this issue. If you are not going to set a price signal on cap-and-trade costs on your natural gas bills, then what is the point? Because the point of putting a price signal or putting the cost of cap-and-trade on the natural gas bill is so that people can actually see how much natural gas they're using and how much more it's costing them to use more natural gas.

The goal of the cap-and-trade being exposed on the bill, if you really care about carbon emissions in the air, is to show people how much they're using and how much it's costing them. If your only goal with the cap-and-trade is to tap into a gigantic pile of tax revenue so you can spend it all over the place, then you'd probably want to keep it secret so that people didn't know how much they were actually paying, so that the government could go and they could use that money however they want in another Liberal slush fund.

That speaks to what the goal, I guess, is of the current government with cap-and-trade. Is it actually to reduce carbon emissions, or is it just to get their hands on a whole bunch of new tax revenue? I think we all know in this Legislature, given the track record of this Liberal government, what their intentions are with this bill.

1420

Now, to the independence of the Ontario Energy Board, a quasi-judicial creation: I think that right now, when you look at all of the different things that have been happening with the Ontario Energy Board, when the Minister of Energy or the Premier's office speaks and says, "Jump," the OEB says, "How high do you want me to jump?" That's what is happening. The independence is gone. When 49 out of 50 delegates show up to the consultations on whether or not cap-and-trade should be on the bills, and 49 of the 50 say that it absolutely should be on there, to send a price signal to consumers, and then the government decides that it's not going to happen, or the OEB decides it's not going to happen, because one delegation says they don't think it should be on there, I think that speaks volumes about what the OEB heard from the delegations and what they intended to do.

Here is one quote for you, and this comes from an Adrian Morrow story in the Globe and Mail last year on this subject. He did a lot of work on this subject. It says, "The Liberals made no mention of carbon pricing during the 2014 election, and chose cap-and-trade over a direct carbon tax. Unlike a carbon tax, which is a straightforward charge on consumers, cap-and-trade imposes costs on businesses, which then pass them down to customers in an often hard-to-trace way."

It says that "anything that's a consumer-visible tax is scary." It certainly is to this government.

So we have a bad policy. We have a senior government member, or numbers of them, meddling with independent agencies. We basically have the formula for every failed Liberal energy policy for the last 15 years. That's why I'm going to be supporting the bill put forward by my friend and colleague from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex today.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: The member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex deserves enormous credit for bringing forward Bill 146, Transparency in Gas Pricing Act, 2017.

Of course, we're debating it at second reading, and I think there is support on this side of the House for the bill. I'm dismayed and rather discouraged to hear that

there seems to be a lack of support on the government side, but we'll see how it turns out in the vote.

The fact is, Madam Speaker, this bill is put forward in an effort to ensure that the government is transparent and accountable. Government would purport and claim to be transparent and accountable, but I would submit to you that if they vote against this bill, they're voting against transparency and accountability, without question.

I think it's also important to point out that this summer, when the Hydro One bills went out, the government was quite proud to place, right on the bill, a statement that their so-called fair hydro plan was reducing the hydro bills by approximately 25%. That was on my Hydro One bill that I saw in the summertime. I wondered if the government directed Hydro One to put that on the bill. If not, why did Hydro One decide to put that on the bill?

Obviously, the government concurs with Hydro One putting that on the hydro bill and, in all likelihood, directed them to do so. If that's the case, Madam Speaker, how can they now say that they are opposed to disclosing the full cost of the cap-and-trade program on the natural gas bills? It makes no sense whatsoever. It's completely inconsistent and contradictory. I would encourage the government members to think about that before they consider how they're going to vote.

The member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex has served in this House since 2011. He has done an extraordinary job representing his constituents. He has brought forward a number of very thoughtful and constructive private member's bills, suggesting that there needs to be a municipal referendum before any new casinos are built, and suggesting that there needs to be a rollback on the cap in Ontario's administration death tax in 2015. He has also brought forward a bill that would have capped Ontario's growing provincial debt in 2016. All of those were good initiatives that he brought forward in this House. Bill 146 is another in a long line of private member's initiatives that the member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex has advocated.

In closing, Madam Speaker, I would suggest to all members of the House that they take into consideration the arguments that have come forward in favour of this bill from the opposition. We maintain that stakeholders and ratepayers have been clear that they want a separate line item on the natural gas bill, so that they know what is being charged for cap-and-trade programs. We say that consumers are already frustrated by the opaque global adjustment fee. We add that this bill is about standing up for consumers who are tired of giving the Liberals a blank cheque.

I think it's important to point out as well that cap-and-trade is complex and difficult to understand. The government owes families and businesses at least this basic level of transparency. Already we're seeing evidence that cap-and-trade is adding more to bills than the Liberals claimed it would. We need hard numbers, not empty Liberal promises. Certainly, if this bill were passed into law, we would see exactly what cap-and-trade is costing

gas consumers and we would have transparency and accountability. That's why we need to support Bill 146.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex to wrap up.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'd like to thank my colleagues on both sides of this House: the members from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Beaches—East York, Whitby—Oshawa, Timiskaming—Cochrane, Mississauga—Streetsville and Nepean—Carleton, our energy critic from Prince Edward—Hastings, and our environment and climate change critic from Wellington—Halton Hills. Thank you so much for participating in this debate.

I brought forward what I think is a very common-sense approach to this issue of cap-and-trade. Deep down inside all of us, regardless of which party we belong to, we think cap-and-trade should be a separate line item on everybody's bill. It makes sense. It's what the people want. It's an idea that has been supported by consumers and gas distributors. The Auditor General did a survey: 89% of consumers in Ontario support this initiative. We have school boards and hospitals; Colleges Ontario; even the former Liberal Minister of Energy from Ottawa West—Nepean supports this initiative. So I would encourage all members to support my Bill 146 when we vote this afternoon.

As I said in my opening, transparency in taxes and fees is necessary to hold politicians to account. People need to see what they're contributing to their government. It will make all of us spend more wisely.

Let's get this to committee where we can debate this further. If there are more recommendations from government members, I'd be willing to discuss those at committee.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and to all members of this House.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We will vote on this item at the end of private members' public business.

FIREFIGHTERS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should immediately and fully adopt the recommendations of the jury in the coroner's inquest into the deaths of Adam Brunt and Gary Kendall to help better ensure the safety of Ontario firefighters and firefighter trainees.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It is always my privilege to stand in this Legislature. Today, together with the families and friends of two men who tragically died, I'm calling on this government to immediately and fully adopt the recommendations of the jury in the coroner's inquest into their deaths, to help better ensure the safety of Ontario firefighters and firefighter trainees.

I have been working with these families and firefighter safety advocates for two and a half years now, and it is

my honour to introduce them. Adam's parents, Al and Christy Brunt; sister Ashlee and family; family members Debbie and Larry Brunt; Carl Pearce; and Brent and Tracey Pearce are here today. The Kendall family: Gary's wife, Brenda; brother Paul and daughter Myrissa; and family friends Wes Mazur and Tyler Mazur also join us.

From the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, we're joined by OPFFA district vice-president Dan VanderLerie. Also joining us: T.J. Thompson, who was a student with him in the course, and Alex Van Kralingen, who was a lawyer involved in this for seven years, who spoke today at our press conference, joined by Nick Hanson.

Thank you all for coming today.

Two and a half years ago, I learned of the death of Adam Brunt, a young man who wanted to be a firefighter and who tragically died during a private rescue training course. I felt heartsick and was compelled to know what had gone wrong. We then found out that another family, the family of Gary Kendall, had lost a loved one the same way five years before. It has been a long and emotional journey for everyone involved, and it has been my privilege to know these families and to struggle through this exhausting and frustrating process with them. It has taken a long time to get here, but hopefully, today we can begin to move forward.

Before we do, I'd like to take us back a bit. The reason we are here is because two men died, and I want us to know who they were.

Gary's daughter, Myrissa, wrote this for me to share: "Gary was 51 when he was involved in the ice water training exercise. He was a hard-working, loving father, husband and brother. Everything he did in life was for his family. He had a wife and three children, who were his whole world. He was the type of dad who worked hard during the day and spent his evenings taking his kids to sporting events, helping them with homework, or supporting them in their current interests. He was the type of man who would give the shirt off his back to help anyone in his community with never having an expectation of receiving anything in return. When he joined the Point Edward fire department he was beyond happy because it was something he could do to not only help protect his community, but it was something he could do to give back."

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"Gary is missed every single day by his family and they are sitting here today after seven long years in hopes that the government will support the prevention of another needless death."

Adam Brunt's father, Al, shared this on behalf of Adam's family:

"Adam was our second child, born on January 31, 1985. He touched many lives in his 30 years; he is greatly missed. It is difficult to put into words who Adam was; he seemed larger than life. He was an animal lover with many pets, he was an avid fisherman and loved camping and his friends. He had a huge heart and you

could rely on Adam to be readily available, no matter the time. He was unique, with his own style sense—best remembered as a young man with a mullet relaxing around the house in his boxer shorts or track pants. He was daring and fun-loving, always looking for new challenges. If you told him something was not possible, he would spend hours figuring out a solution.

"Though he was the middle child, he was the 'protective older brother'.... It did not come as a surprise when Adam decided he wanted to be a firefighter" like his uncle, "a career in which he could dedicate his life to helping others. He had never been happier in school than when he was doing the firefighting program at Durham College. Adam had found his calling.

"Although Adam was taken from us too soon, he certainly lived his short life to the fullest. We can only imagine the things he would have done if he was still with us."

Thank you.

Speaker, Gary Kendall was 51. He was a volunteer firefighter who died during an ice/water rescue training exercise on January 31, 2010. He was a 17-year veteran of the Point Edward fire department. He was taking a course run by a private training company when he died.

Adam Brunt was 30 and was a firefighting student from Bowmanville who died during a swift/cold water training exercise in Hanover on January 8, 2015. He was a Durham College student in the firefighting program at the time. He was taking a weekend course run by the very same private training company as Gary Kendall.

Speaker, both men died under similar tragic circumstances, five years apart. Gary Kendall's family called for an inquest after his death in 2010, but there wasn't one. Instead, there was another death five years later, and another family grieving.

Adam was a student in a program who, like many firefighter hopefuls, wanted to gain experience and pad his résumé to compete for a job with the fire service. There are many private safety and private rescue courses marketed to firefighter hopefuls. Adam found a Herschel rescue course on Facebook and assumed it was legit because others had taken it. It was a swift-water and cold-water rescue course. It was an overnight weekend course with 12 students. They learned about safety and techniques and spent the weekend learning and practising advanced level skills.

On the last run of the second day, all 12 students and the instructor jumped in the Saugeen River and floated down, one after another, through a narrow, swift-moving section of river between two banks of ice. One by one they emerged through the narrow rapids, bobbing out the other side downriver. But Adam didn't. When he went through the narrows, he was forced under the water and his exposed strap got caught on underwater metal. The group was helpless to save him. The young students had neither the skills nor the equipment or tools to reach him or save him. They desperately tried, but it was many minutes before actual firefighters arrived and helped, with proper tools, to free him. By then, tragically, it was not a rescue but a recovery.

T.J. Thompson was one of the other students on that course and joins us today. She worked with the other students to try to reach him. She even ran up to the road to flag down passing cars, to beg for an ice scraper or an axe or rope—anything to reach him. They had no rescue equipment there.

Speaker, so many things went wrong that day, and nothing has been made right. Adam was a firefighter trainee. However, he was unprotected. He was unprotected, and others continue to be, and here's why: These private companies are unregulated.

Sorry, Speaker; it's been quite a journey.

These private companies are unregulated.

Interjection.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Oh, no, I'm good; I can do this.

They do not have to adhere—

M^{me} France Gélinas: We'll stay with you.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Oh, no, it's a long one. I'm good. Thank you.

They do not have to adhere to safety standards or industry best practices. Their certificates mean nothing. Their only value is what fire services give them. It is a “buyer beware” situation. Trainees unfortunately assume private courses must be legitimate since they are very technical, hands-on and industry-specific, and they are allowed to operate in this province.

Adam was a college student, but he took a private course that was not affiliated with his or any other college. So Adam was unprotected by any laws or regulations under the ministry of advanced education and training. Adam was not yet an actual firefighter, so he was not protected by the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services. If he had been employed by a fire service, their training would have had to have met safety requirements. Also, the Ministry of Labour does not have jurisdiction, because these training environments are not technically workplaces and these trainees are not employees.

While these firefighter trainees are learning to keep us safe, we still haven't figured out how to keep them safe. None of these ministries is technically responsible for these trainees or their safety. This is an area that doesn't fall under any ministry's jurisdiction, which, in my way of thinking, makes it a shared responsibility.

Alex Van Kralingen spoke earlier, at our press conference. He was the lawyer for the Kendall family in 2010 and again during this inquest. He said, “I will tell you what I told the jury in my closing submissions: It is crazy, given everything that we regulate in our everyday lives, that this sort of high-risk and technical firefighting training is not regulated.”

“The government has the power to fix this problem, and this matter needs to be dealt with now, especially given this government's history of inaction on the issue.

“This is not a partisan issue. Keeping firefighters and pre-service students safe is not controversial.”

Since Adam's traumatizing death, Miss Thompson has been a relentless advocate. She testified for hours at the inquest. I would like to share some of her thoughts:

“I was one of the 12 students training on the swift, icy Saugeen River on February 8 when Adam Brunt was killed. Adam's death was preventable in many ways and completely unnecessary. Firefighters take risks when there is life and property to be saved and protected. This was training. There was no reason for unnecessary risks. Reasonable precautions for safety were not taken. It was not a sacrifice for another life. There was nothing gained from Adam's death.

“But we can change that together....

“I call on this government to protect this vulnerable group of inexperienced trainees from unregulated training providers who choose to operate below the best industry practice. They need to be protected. You, the government, heard this for yourselves at the coroner's inquest, and you agreed.

“The safety loophole remains open for trainees and workers. How much longer will it take to protect this province and give closure to the families who have lost their loved ones for nothing? We have waited too long. It's time for this government to act....

“Thank you.”

Applause.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Oh, no, I'm not—thank you to them. I've got more.

Speaker, I have written four letters to government ministers. I have given two member's statements. I have asked a direct question for the Premier about regulating this industry. I held a press conference with the families and firefighters to call for an inquest. There has been a police investigation and a Ministry of Labour investigation. I have met with ministers and their policy folk. We had a two-week inquest this past May. This afternoon we held another press conference, and now I have put forward this motion.

There are 15 jury recommendations, all with merit. This isn't a time to cherry-pick; it's the time to adopt them all to keep people safe. Families, industry experts, lawyers and the crown all invested precious time and sincere effort to get the most out of the two-week inquest. Government, please do not let this inquest be a PR exercise.

Rob Hyndman, the president of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, has said, “The verdict of the jury in these inquests provides valuable recommendations put forward by concerned citizens.... Given the disappointing rate of coroner's inquest jury recommendation adoption, I would urge all parties to provide an opportunity for these points to be implemented, hence providing the deceased a platform for change. Doing so will ensure we learn from their tragedies and not repeat mistakes. We must ensure their loss is not in vain.”

Speaker, we have gotten a lot of assurances from this government, but so far, little else. Gary and Adam are remembered as being men who wanted to keep others safe and protected. I challenge all of us in this House to endeavour to do the same. We must adopt the recommendations from the coroner's inquest and keep firefighters and firefighter trainees safe. We must keep them safe because they would do it for us.

1440

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Granville Anderson: Firstly, I would like to extend my deepest condolences to the families, friends and colleagues of Adam Brunt and Gary Kendall. Thank you for being here. It's a brave, brave, brave step to be here this afternoon on this occasion.

I'm so honoured to be able to speak to this motion.

Adam was a constituent of mine who attended Durham College in pursuit of his dreams of becoming a firefighter, and his life was cut short far too soon.

I'd like to take this time to thank the member from Oshawa for her long advocacy on this important issue and for bringing forward this motion. I know how passionate she is about this, and she has been pursuing this for over two and a half years. That's to be commended.

In this House, Madam Speaker, a lot of times we get partisan. This is not an issue to be partisan about; this is an issue that affects all of us. It's an issue about life. It's an issue about two young folks losing their lives in pursuit of something that they enjoyed doing.

Our government—your government—is carefully addressing the findings and recommendations of the coroner's inquest into Adam's death and Gary's as well. Such findings from the coroners' inquests help ministries across government ensure their policies and procedures are in line with best practices. Recommendations from inquests over the years have led to numerous steps in developing new policies and procedures. There are several examples of these, including increased mental-health training for police and correctional officers, expanding police use of non-lethal weapons like tasers, and your government—our government—implementing Canada's first concussion legislation.

I know that the Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management took action to suspend the water rescue program of the Ontario Fire College unit until further notice, immediately following the inquest.

Our government—your government—also recently launched the first Fire Safety Technical Table, where our fire-safety partners meet to examine current emergency fire-safety challenges and opportunities.

Firefighter training has been discussed at the table by leading fire-safety and protection experts and leaders. In addition, the Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management is currently working towards a mid-November technical working group to discuss the more technical aspects of the recommendations related to ice and swift-water rescue.

The findings from this inquest are being addressed and considered as we all work to further enhance fire safety in Ontario.

Again, I want to thank the member from Oshawa for this motion, which brings forward a great opportunity to further discuss the conditions our firefighters work in.

It's not just firefighters; all of our emergency responders need to be protected and need to work in a

safe environment, and we need to make sure their safety is paramount, because we all count on them to protect us and to keep us safe. They do a tremendous job every day in the face of life-threatening conditions, and we are forever indebted to them.

Fire safety and protection and protecting our dedicated firefighters is an important issue for everyone across this province.

I, personally, will be supporting this motion along with members of our government, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to address this matter today.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I rise today to speak to the motion before us, from my colleague the member from Oshawa, on ensuring the safety of Ontario firefighters and firefighter trainees.

Firefighters put their lives on the line every day to protect and serve others in their respective communities. They're valued members of our communities; they are our friends and also family members.

It's particularly fitting, Speaker, that this motion is before us this afternoon, as the Ontario firefighters' annual memorial service ceremony will be held at Queen's Park on October 1.

On February 8, 2015, Adam Brunt passed away during a firefighter training exercise on the Saugeen River. Adam was a Clarington firefighting student participating in a training exercise for situations involving icy-water rescues.

In a 2016 National Post story, the past president of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, Mr. Carmen Santoro, said:

"We're the only first responders without a set of standards.... We need standards, standards in training, standards in fire prevention.... We accept risk as first responders, but in a training evolution?"

"Training should be regulated, safe, and you should walk away alive."

Unfortunately, the accident involving Adam Brunt was not an isolated situation. Gary Kendall of Point Edward passed away during a similar ice-training rescue exercise five years prior.

These two incidents rightly raise concerns over the need for scrutiny of the industry that offers private training courses for firefighters, as currently the industry is unregulated. That is why a coroner's inquest was called in June 2016 to investigate and make recommendations to prevent tragedies like this from ever happening again. In May 2017, the coroner's jury made a total of 15 recommendations to several ministries—including the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development and the Ministry of Labour—the centremost of which was an immediate halt of all cold-water training on sites where the underwater current is too swift.

The jury also made other crucial recommendations, such as calling for the establishment of a committee of experts to investigate how to administer ice-rescue training in a low-risk manner; creating an approved training curriculum using examples from the National Fire Protection Association as the baseline standard; taking all necessary steps, including changes to legislation or regulations, as required, to ensure that all trainers, instructors and service providers abide by the approved curriculum and that the courses take place only in appropriate or approved locations; and creating a system where trainers, instructors or providers of icy- or cold-water courses are certified to offer those courses.

Speaker, the effected ministries were given up to three years by the coroner's jury to respond to the recommendations. In a May 25, 2017, Toronto Sun article after the recommendations from the coroner's inquest were made, Adam Brunt's father, Al, spoke to the importance of the implementation of the recommendations. He said, "The people that are opting to get into first responders as a career deserve to be protected, deserve safety.... Just to take a training course they shouldn't have to put their life on the line and that's hopefully what these policies, once enacted, will protect going forward."

This brings us back to the motion before us today, which calls upon the government of Ontario to "immediately and fully adopt the recommendations" from the inquest. The Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus is proud to stand up for the safety of firefighters and firefighter trainees, and I'm therefore pleased to support the motion brought forward this afternoon by the member from Oshawa.

We look forward to the government's response to the coroner's office's recommendations, because, as I said at the beginning of my comments, firefighters put their lives on the line every day to protect and serve others in their respective communities. We owe them no less. It is time for us to stand up this afternoon and show our support for firefighters and firefighter trainees.

1450

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise on behalf of my constituents of Windsor West to bring some comments to the motion before us.

I would like to start by commending my colleague from Oshawa for her tireless advocacy on this particular issue. As you could tell during her 12 minutes, this is an issue that is very close to her heart.

I don't think that any of us could or should be able to look at a motion like what we have before us and not support it. All you have to do is look to the gallery to my left to see the faces of those loved ones, the families and friends and fellow firefighters and trainees of the two men, Adam Brunt and Gary Kendall, that we're talking about today who lost their lives during training in order to keep all of us in this chamber and all of us in this province safe.

It was two and a half years ago that the member from Oshawa first raised this issue—two and a half years since

these tragedies took place—and there has been no action. That is truly shameful, frankly, that nothing has been done in that time frame to prevent another tragedy like that, that happened to the two gentlemen who lost their lives during training. Action should have been taken faster. I'm pleased that what I'm hearing from all sides of the House is that they're going to support the motion, that they're going to support the recommendations from the inquest and actually start to make training for firefighters and firefighter trainees much safer than what it is today.

I had the pleasure of standing here when we were debating PTSD legislation, where I was able to share a story that was written by one of the firefighters in my area—he's actually the president of the local in my area—and some of the experiences that firefighters have on a regular basis in their line of duty, and much like the member from Oshawa, I couldn't make it through that without having to stop and take a moment and collect myself. At the time, I had mentioned that I was having a hard time reading back their lived experiences, sharing what they've actually lived. I could not imagine actually seeing some of the things that they see and experiencing some of the things that they experience.

I think that's really at the heart of what we're talking about today: that we have men and women who are willing to put their lives on the line for us on a daily basis. Whether they're on duty that day or not, they are driven to protect all of us in this province, to make sure that we are safe and that our families and our friends are safe. Yet we have a situation where those who are going to train to be firefighters, or those who are firefighters and are taking additional training, are being put into situations where they are not safe, where they could possibly not return to their family and loved ones and not provide the service that they do to us.

So it's incumbent upon us all to not just support the motion that is before us, because it's easy to stand up and support a motion. The difficult part is to actually act on it. I'm hoping today that we don't just have a government that's going to stand up and say that they support the motion before us, but that there are going to be actionable items, that they are actually going to fix a broken system. They are actually going to go forward and make sure that these training procedures are regulated and that those who are entering into these training procedures are as safe as they possibly can be; to make sure that the private companies providing the training are qualified to do so, and that they have proper equipment, should there be an emergency that arises during the training; and that they are giving our firefighters and our firefighter trainees the best possible skill set going forward, so that when they are in our communities and providing services to us, they can do that not only to keep us safe, but to keep themselves safe.

Before I wrap up, I just encourage not only that everybody support this motion, but that we actually do something about it and that it happens quickly.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate? I recognize the Minister of Seniors Affairs.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I rise today to speak to this motion. I want to begin by recognizing the member from Oshawa for her really heartfelt remarks. It's very clear that this issue, and this motion that she has brought forward, is something that she is passionate about and that she has worked on for long. I know that all of us, as MPPs, strive to shine a light on and fix things that we are passionate about. So I just wanted to recognize that.

This motion does bring forward a good opportunity to further discuss the conditions that our firefighters work in. They do a tremendous job every day in the face of life-threatening conditions, and we are forever indebted to them.

Fire safety and protecting our dedicated firefighters is an important issue for all of us. I think we can all agree that Ontario is one of the leading jurisdictions in the world when it comes to fire safety and the delivery of fire services. Ontario's firefighters are respected worldwide for the outstanding work they do in emergency response and fire safety education.

Enhanced fire codes and fire prevention awareness have changed the landscape for our province's firefighters. Between 1995 and 2015, the annual number of fires in Ontario, excluding federal and First Nations properties, dropped by almost 45%. The numbers of fires and fire-related deaths are trending downward. We want to see that trend continue, and must start to address the gaps in the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, to improve fire safety.

The act is almost 20 years old, and has not been modernized to keep pace with advancements in technology and new challenges. These challenges include training, standardized fire code inspections, and issues surrounding dispatch—some of the things that we are working on.

This is why our government launched the Fire Safety Technical Table, in which the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services meets with fire chiefs, fire safety representatives and municipal representatives to examine current and emerging fire safety challenges and opportunities. The input and advice from this table will enhance and inform the ministry's recommendations to enhance fire safety in Ontario and help to ensure that our firefighters return home safe to their families.

We know from prior experience that the round table approach works. In early 2012, the fire marshal set up the technical advisory committee to recommend new initiatives to better protect residents in licensed retirement homes and care facilities. This committee included expert representation from the firefighter community, community stakeholders, and owners and operators of retirement homes and care facilities. Aided by their excellent work, Ontario became the first province to make automatic sprinklers mandatory in these buildings. This is a testimony to the collaborative approach.

I know that the member is very passionate about this issue, and I just want to reassure her that the Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management has worked with a number of ministries, before and after the inquest,

to address the issues raised in these tragic incidents. Upon conclusion of the inquest, the OFMEM led an inter-ministerial working group to discuss the implementation of the recommendations. This is in addition to immediately adopting the recommendation to put this particular rescue program on hiatus, until further notice, at the Ontario Fire College.

I know that the OFMEM is currently working towards a mid-November technical working group to discuss the more technical aspects of the recommendations related to ice and swift-water rescue.

1500

All in all, I just want to commend the member for bringing this motion forward. We look forward to working with all parties concerned to figure out a way to make sure that our firefighters come home safely.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to commend my friend and the member from Oshawa, Ms. French, and proudly say that our caucus will be supporting this resolution for the government to fully implement the jury recommendations to help better ensure the safety of Ontario firefighters and firefighter trainees.

Adam Brunt, who was a Durham College student and only 30 years old, died on February 8, 2015, during cold-water rescue training. Gary Kendall was 51 years old when he died on January 31, 2010, during the same firefighter ice rescue training. I'd like to offer my condolences on behalf of our PC caucus to the families of both Mr. Brunt and Mr. Kendall.

The inquest examined the events surrounding their deaths. As the members heard, the deaths happened during a private safety training course which currently has no government oversight for certification. The inquest jury's verdict ruled that the deaths were accidents, and the jury made 15 recommendations in May of this year aimed at preventing similar deaths in the future.

The key recommendation was to suspend all swift-water ice training until a committee of experts establishes standards to minimize risks. They also recommended that the province allow designated locations for training so long as the proper equipment, techniques and standards are in place to allow for safe training. Creation of a training curriculum was also recommended, to ensure all instructors and fire protection services are certified or qualified to an appropriate standard, including public and private services.

Sadly, this government has a pattern of fumbling on implementing jury recommendations. As the long-term-care and seniors' critic for our PC caucus, for some time I have been raising the situation stemming from another inquest, the 2005 Casa Verde, into two long-term-care murders, where only 30% of the recommendations have been adopted by this Liberal government. There's simply no excuse for them to not implement all of those recommendations; they have had 12 years. The government has to take responsibility and action.

Our caucus has certainly done that over the years. My colleague the MPP for Perth-Wellington, Randy

Pettapiece, tabled the Ray and Walter Act, a bill that aims to save firefighters' lives by requiring buildings to alert fire crews to any use of trusses in their construction.

We have also had long-time advocacy for two-hatter firefighters by my colleague the MPP for Wellington-Halton Hills, Ted Arnott, who since 2002 has been calling for professional firefighters to have the right to volunteer or serve part-time in their home communities on their days off.

More recently, our leader, Patrick Brown, has been relentless in his calls on the Premier to fast-track the passage of Bill 2 and offer up much-needed supports for firefighters and other first responders suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, PTSD.

I have the greatest respect for our firefighters, both volunteer and professional, and I extend a sincere thank you to all of them, those in the audience and those listening at home and every firefighter who has ever served in any of our communities, and their families, for their dedicated service.

We are fortunate and privileged to be able to go out in our communities. One of my greatest honours is going to the fire departments, chatting with them and showing our thanks and gratitude. I thank them for their time, their effort, their dedication, but also to their wives and families and their spouses. Every time the bell rings, every time that pager goes off, you never know if that person is coming back through the door. There's nothing more solemn than when we say, "Thank you for your dedicated service."

We agree that all firefighters are risking their lives every day to protect us and our communities' well-being. It is my hope and my challenge to the government that they will support and fully adopt the recommendations and put them into action, to get our firefighters the protections they need and deserve.

We've recently just, sadly in some ways and regrettably in some ways, celebrated and remembered 9/11. It's a scene that all of us will probably remember for all of our lives. You'll know where you were. You'll know the time of day when we saw that. One of those images for me will always be that as other people were running out of the buildings, firefighters were running into the buildings. They were taking their lives and putting them in danger, for the benefit of others.

I've had the privilege of knowing a lot of family members and friends, both female and male, who serve. Particularly in a rural area like ours, most of it is volunteer firefighters, who dedicate their lives, who take a passion and go out a couple of times every week to hone their craft.

My late cousin Carl Jones was a captain of the Sauble fire department. One of the things I know from Carl—he was a very talented guy, a very low-key guy, but one of his greatest passions and pride was when he put on his captain's uniform and showed up at a fire. I know his family. He's been gone for a number of years now, but just recently, I remember that my cousin Carl's son, his daughter Peggy and I were chatting, reminiscing about

how much he put into that. Of all the things—he wasn't overly educated, but he was a guy who the other firefighters knew, when he showed up, had their back. That's what firefighters do: They make sure they are there.

The firefighters in our area have to do a lot of fundraising for a lot of the equipment they have, just because of the reality of the situation. Again, I dedicate and I honour them, and I say thank you to them and their families, because not only do they volunteer to do the firefighting, but they're out a couple of times a week or on the weekend, dedicating their lives to raising money for equipment, to ensure that they and their colleagues—their brothers in arms—have the proper equipment and life-saving opportunities, and the training, frankly, that they deserve.

I've attended a couple of times, whenever my schedule permits it here at Queen's Park, the annual ceremony for fallen firefighters. It's humbling to stand, and it touches you. It raises the hair on the back of your neck to look at the inscribed names. Almost every riding in our province has at least one name on there of someone you may not have known, but you know that they did that with dedication and pride, and because of their service to their community.

Madam Speaker, I think this is a good resolution. Again, I implore the government of the day to stand with us, along with the NDP, who have raised this issue, and to make this law, to make this happen. Put the actions into place so that we ensure, forever, that our firefighters and firefighter trainees have the proper training, equipment and safety that they so deserve.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: First, I want to thank the member from Oshawa for her relentlessness on this issue. She truly has been a champion over the years, and relentlessness is what it takes.

The member just mentioned Bill 2, on PTSD. That bill took five tablings and eight years to get passed in this House. That was the work of our party, the New Democratic Party of Ontario.

I have to say that consulting and inaction—even voting a motion in—is not real action. It does not save lives. A good metaphor is exactly what our firefighters do. Imagine if our firefighters, upon getting a call or a bell ringing, sat down and had a meeting about it, or voted together on whether they'd go out, or convened a panel around whether something should be done. We as politicians, as representatives of the people, unfortunately don't take action when we should take action.

The appeal to the government to act is an appeal—the same as it is when those bells go off—to save lives, because I can tell you that over the years that we do not act, lives are lost. There were a number of suicides since that first tabling of the PTSD bill. One of them, a firefighter, phoned our office at Queen's Park and said he wanted to kill himself. I said, "You know I'm going to

have to phone 911,” and he said, “Please don’t. I don’t want to traumatize any of our other first responders.” That was after three tablings of that bill. That life, luckily, was saved, but that was one. Many were lost.

How many more Adams and Garys will it take to get this bill put into action—not debated, not to come back over and over again, not another consultation, not another coroner’s inquest, but to get those jury recommendations actually put into force? Every month that we don’t, we risk lives, as surely as if our first responders, our firefighters, didn’t go out on calls once the bells were ringing, didn’t act once they were called to. In the same way that they would risk lives, we risk lives.

We think this is a passive job, but it’s not a passive job. It truly is a calling upon all of us to do what is necessary and what is right. It’s time, Madam Speaker. How many more times will our member from Oshawa have to come back? I warrant that she shouldn’t have to come back one other time, that those 15 jury recommendations should be acted on now. The government has a majority. They can do it. Get it done.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I, too, am pleased to offer my condolences to the families and friends that have come here today to show how important it is for this government to act. We are in a privileged position, as MPPs, to have influence on our entire province. I would say that the number one job of government is to protect the public, and we have an opportunity today to do just that.

How could it be that we have something as dangerous as swift-water and cold-water training with no oversight whatsoever of who offers this training? It blows my mind. How could it be that they were teaching cold-water rescue and they did not have the proper equipment to rescue their own students?

I must admit, my husband was a professional firefighter for many, many decades, and cold-water rescue is something that they trained in every year. I live in northern Ontario; we do lots of cold-water rescues. People go through the ice with snowmobiles. The time it takes to train them—the entire department is there. Half of the department is there, because while some of the firefighters train, everybody else is on duty making sure that if something goes wrong, they rescue one another. And it has happened. It’s not like it’s one chance in a thousand; it happens all the time.

Water, ice, cold water and swift water are extremely dangerous, yet we had a private company offering that kind of training with no oversight. We have had two families that are here today grieving, and now it is our chance to step up to the plate. Now it is our chance, when we vote, to not only speak but commit to changing things, commit to taking action. As to why we have a government action: so that this government will protect the public. And how do you protect the public? You make sure that dangerous training for firefighters has oversight, it has accountability and it has backup so that

if something goes wrong, you are there to protect those people.

It seems pretty logical. We had an inquiry; we had a jury that put it into 15 recommendations, in ways that are way better than I could—but the spirit is the same. If you put into place those 15 recommendations, there will be oversight; there will be everything there to make sure that Gary and Adam have not gone in vain, that something positive will come out of this horrendous tragedy, and that we will have done our basic job as legislators to protect the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member from Oshawa to wrap up.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I would like to thank my colleagues around this Legislature and to thank the members who spoke during this debate and discussion. I also appreciate the reassuring words of the government, but we will appreciate more their action.

Again, I’d like to thank the families and safety advocates who are here today in support of this motion to adopt the inquest recommendations. I think it’s important for this government and for this House to not only support this motion, but to make these recommendations have teeth, and to also reassure these families and the rest of Ontario that the inquest process isn’t just an exercise in shifting responsibility, or public relations.

These inquest recommendations are very thoughtful and strong. There was a lot of emotional and expert input that went into their creation, and they are the right fit. We want them to be adopted entirely. The government shouldn’t just, as they put it, “carefully” consider or try to cherry-pick and break these recommendations into pieces. We are calling on them to fully adopt and implement the recommendations, and to close this loophole to keep every firefighter trainee safe in this province.

This has been a very personal process, starting with two tragic losses. Adopting these recommendations and supporting this motion is about ensuring that no one else suffers this kind of loss.

This has been a long and emotional journey: for Adam’s family, two and a half years; and for Gary’s family, more than seven. Adam and Gary wanted to make their communities safer. There has been a real sense of purpose along this journey as we’ve been working together through this with the families and with firefighters across communities that support appropriate training and safety.

It is in a firefighter’s DNA to keep people safe. Today, it is in our power to keep people safe and to close a very real loophole that tragically took two lives. To Adam and Gary, thank you. You answered the call. I urge all members of this House today to respect the inquest process and to support my motion today, in memory of Adam Brunt and Gary Kendall, to fully adopt the recommendations of the coroner’s inquest into their unnecessary deaths. In the wake of such loss, it is the least we can do.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We will vote on this item at the end of private members’ public business.

ILLEGAL PILL PRESS ACT, 2017
LOI DE 2017 SUR LES PRESSES
À COMPRIMER ILLÉGALES

Mr. Harris moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 126, An Act to amend the Drug and Pharmacies Regulation Act / Projet de loi 126, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la réglementation des médicaments et des pharmacies.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Michael Harris: I appreciate the opportunity to directly address what has become one of the most impactful, deadly and heart-wrenching drug overdose crises of our generation.

We in Ontario, in Canada and across North America are in the midst of a sweeping opioid overdose epidemic whose impact is tearing families and communities apart and is indiscriminately claiming the lives of opioid users and those who unintentionally take drugs laced with opioids.

Speaker, two Ontarians die every day from opioid abuse or inadvertent use. Let me say that again: Two Ontarians die every day due to opioids. In the first six months of last year, that amounted to 412 opioid overdose deaths for Ontarians, an 11% increase year over year. In my area of Waterloo region alone, 20 people have died of opioid overdoses between January and April of this year. Here in Toronto, opioids were to blame for a third of all accidental deaths in 2015.

The numbers don't lie. They are catastrophic, frightening, and they demand a response. Without government action, intervention and leadership, this epidemic shows no signs of stopping. In fact, its toll is growing every day, month and year we fail to act.

That toll calls out for provincial action to address these tragic outcomes in Ontario. That's why I have come to this Legislature today to ask the support of all parties and all members in a united effort to take one direct step to tackle one of the root causes of this crisis at its source.

We all understand that there is no silver bullet in fixing the opioid crisis. However, the measures I am proposing today can be key pieces to complement a requisite broader strategy from governments at all levels.

The fact is that while the misuse of legitimate opioid prescriptions is absolutely a significant part of the agonizing stories families are bearing the brunt of every day, equally concerning are the fatal consequences of counterfeit, illegal or black market opioids. As we speak here in this Legislature today, there are dealers working pill presses in their basements to churn out black market pills that look exactly like an OxyContin or Xanax pill, but in reality are laced with a potentially lethal dose of fentanyl.

We see the toll it is taking out on our streets every day. We hear the stories of unsuspecting users taking what they think will be a quick fix that turns out to be a

final death blow. I think of that tragic story out west, when word of the deadly impacts of Canada's opioid crisis was beginning to emerge back in 2015. I'm sure many of us recall the feelings of dread and sorrow for the family and baby boy of 31-year-old Hardy Leighton and his 30-year-old wife, Amelia, who had just dropped their toddler off at Grandma's on July 20 before a tragic sequence of events began to unfold. Two days later, the couple was found lifeless on the floor of their home among the boxes they were in the process of packing up, with a turquoise-coloured powder and straw nearby.

Coroner Barb McLintock later confirmed the presence of fentanyl at the time of their deaths, noting that "they had been taking prescription medication that had a respiratory depressant effect that compounded the effect of the fentanyl." She added that while she did not know what the couple had bought that was laced with fentanyl, in some cases users have ingested fentanyl believing that they had been sold either illicit drugs such as oxycodone, cocaine or ecstasy.

1520

Speaker, these are the tragic outcomes playing out in so many of our communities, literally pulling families apart due to unsuspecting users being given a fatal dose by a dealer and black-market drug producer lacing common street drugs with deadly fentanyl.

I want to mention that closer to home, we've watched as the wave of opioid-related deaths moved eastward across our province creating sorrowful stories here, of course, in our own province.

This morning in the media studio, we heard the frightening circumstances that faced Ottawa teen Leila Attar, who has joined us this afternoon.

Leila is lucky to be alive after an overdose of fentanyl from a pill that looked like what she believed to be a Percocet. As was reported by the CBC and Global, and as we heard this morning from Leila herself, if it weren't for the frantic banging on her door from a concerned friend, Leila Attar might not be here with us today. I'm happy to report that she is here, in fact, watching us from the very gallery over there.

Leila told us how, after three years of battling addiction, her drug dealer gave her a handful of Percocet without telling her the pills had been laced with a deadly opiate, fentanyl. The dealer was well aware, but he didn't bother to let her know. After the pills made her violently sick and pass out last November, it was the quick thinking of a friend banging at Leila's door when she ignored her text messages that led to the necessary attention and eventual recovery from what her dealer eventually admitted were fentanyl-laced pills.

Now, thankfully, Ms. Attar treated this as a turning point in her life, leading her to treatment and now into an advocacy role warning of the dangers of opioids.

Sadly, not all are lucky enough to survive the opioid overdose trauma. It was just a few short months later, in February, that a death of another Ottawa-area teen, 14-year-old Chloe Kotval of Kanata, from pills laced with fentanyl that helped spur Leila on to speaking out to

teens across the province of the dangers of laced black-market drugs.

Speaker, Leila's passion for helping people is now motivating her to turn her difficult history into something others can learn from. We, of course, applaud her for her leadership.

That said, it's similar leadership we need today from legislators in this building to help turn the tide in this toxic wave of illegal-opioid deaths.

One vital step that we can take together would be to address the problem at its source by taking direct aim at the dealer or the pill makers who are working pill presses in their basements every day to churn out black-market pills identical to OxyContin and Xanax, but which are in reality laced with potentially lethal doses of fentanyl. Doing so would be one way we, as elected members of this provincial Parliament, can reverse the ease of access to pill presses in our province that has allowed illicit pill production to flourish.

A quick Google search will provide a list of eager websites ready to sell you one of these death machines for anywhere from \$1,000 to \$10,000. Get it shipped for free from China to Canada, and they even throw a kilogram of fentanyl in with it.

Why fentanyl, Speaker? Because, despite the clear fatal implications, fentanyl is one of the quickest ways to boost a dealer's bottom line. In the end, that is all that they care about.

You see, while a kilo of fentanyl powder may cost the same as heroin the fact that fentanyl is 50 times more powerful than heroin, and 100 times more powerful than morphine means that a dealer can use smaller amounts per pill or dose to maximize their profits. With as little as two milligrams of fentanyl—the equivalent of about four grains of salt—able to kill users, the profit comes, of course, at a terrible price.

A police officer I spoke to indicated that every one gram of fentanyl can be turned into 100 grams of street-sellable product.

A kilo of fentanyl costing around \$10,000 is enough to make one million tablets that sell from anywhere from \$20 in a major city, for total proceeds of tens of millions of dollars. Multiply that by the power of carfentanil, fentanyl's 100-times-stronger cousin, and the profit margin grows even further and, of course, even deadlier.

Regrettably, what the black market pill producers see as a lucrative business venture is literally killing people, young and old, in our province. They must be stopped. They're using these machines as we speak to convert raw fentanyl or other opioid powder into pill form, often stamping and dyeing them to look like legitimate pharmacy-produced pills, or mixing them with other street drugs, including meth, cocaine, MDMA, Xanax and even a blotter of acid, because the criminals making these pills are not concerned with quality control. These are not chemists; they're drug dealers. They're perhaps the lowest form of society. Any one of the tablets churned out by a pill press may contain a hot patch of fentanyl. That's an instant death sentence for someone who unknowingly takes one.

Victims, their families and police themselves are sounding the alarm on illegal opioids and the pill presses that create them, but so far, few are answering the bell. RCMP Corporal Eric Boechler, a member of the federal Clandestine Laboratory Enforcement and Response Team, has indicated the potential huge impact of regulating pill presses on a provincial and federal level. He goes on: "The pill presses are pumping out pharmaceutical-grade tablets that are directly mimicking what a drug user would assume is a pharmaceutical pill."

Victoria Staff Sergeant Conor King has argued that there is no legitimate reason for someone to have a pill press, noting, "The proliferation of those pills on the street is responsible for a great number of fatal overdoses."

While we recognize the federal government on this front for their action to ban the further importation of pill presses to prevent further proliferation on our streets, we must, as provincial legislators, recognize our responsibility to legislate and prevent the use of those pill-producing machines that are already here and have come here over the years while Ontario was seen as a haven for unregulated pill presses.

That's why I'm asking, fellow colleagues, for your support of my private member's bill, the Illegal Pill Press Act, which will directly address black market opioid production through (1) prohibition of the use of a pill press by someone other than a licensed pharmacy or otherwise authorized professional, which would make it illegal; (2) policing tools—evidence of illegal pill press use will allow police further grounds to support a request for a warrant to go in and stop these dealers in their tracks; and, most importantly, (3) the penalties—a first offence: a \$200,000 penalty and/or six months in jail; a second offence: a \$350,000 penalty and/or one year in jail; and a third offence, two years in jail and a half-a-million-dollar penalty. If you're not authorized, if you're not a pharmacy or a pharmacist, you are going to face jail time and fines for possessing one of these machines.

We understand that there is no one, single solution that is going to be able to solve this opioid crisis with one blow. We recognize that both proper use and misuse of the often vital pharmaceutically-produced legitimate opioids must be fully addressed before we can dig ourselves out of this dark epidemic. Again, I ask all here for their support. If we can save one life with this meaningful step, I feel it is our duty to do so. I ask that you take that step with me today.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's my pleasure to stand as the member for London—Fanshawe to represent my constituents and speak to the bill that was brought by the member for Kitchener—Conestoga, Bill 126, An Act to amend the Drug and Pharmacies Regulation Act.

The member talked a lot about the lethal drug fentanyl and the horrible outcomes that can happen when people ingest amounts that are fatal. From that, he has brought this motion forward. We all know that there is an opioid

crisis in Ontario. Actually, Speaker, there's an opioid crisis across the country. He has brought this bill forward in trying to move the government a small step toward helping to stop the opioid crisis and having illegal pill press machines in legislation. That way, we can stop the black market, the underground market, from putting traces of fentanyl in pills—which means people will suffer injury, illness and death.

I want to commend the woman who's here today, Ms. Attar, for coming forward, sharing her story and helping the member push this bill forward into the House. She was one of the ones able to turn her life around, but many aren't so fortunate.

1530

In London, we have an opioid crisis. Right now, the London council is talking about safe injection sites because it's such a crucial thing that is happening throughout the province. Cities are recognizing that we need to do something. Not so long ago, back on August 28, just recently, 700 health care workers called on the Ontario government of Kathleen Wynne, in an open letter, to address the opioid crisis. They asked this government to declare a provincial emergency due to the disturbing increase in overdoses and deaths related to the opioid crisis, and the government hasn't yet done that. They haven't acknowledged there is an emergency situation in this province, and they need to deal with that.

If they were to acknowledge that, according to the letter, the Ontario government could declare an emergency under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act. It says that such a move would enable harm reduction workers, public health, primary care, addiction medicine, psychiatric and internal medicine teams to develop safe and effective equitable responses to the rising number of deaths. If they declared that, these health care workers, the health care sector, could come together and help solve some of this problem, but they haven't done that.

By making that declaration, the government could actually send a message that it's crucial that we deal with this crisis because families are suffering, because people are losing their lives, because health care workers are burned out. This is something that is so important.

I have to tell you that, being in this Legislature, there are certain things that I have noticed lately. We are creating legislation around people dying. We are creating legislation in long-term care because we had the criminal case of eight murders under Wetlaufer. We want a public inquiry. We got the public inquiry into those murders, but we are asking for a broader scope so that we can address systemic issues. Those are things we need to do.

We are creating legislation around an opioid crisis because people are dying. We are creating legislation around corrections because people are dying. We need to take a serious look at the opioid crisis, and we need to understand that this is a small-step solution so that we can save lives.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Arthur Potts: It does give me great pleasure to stand here on behalf of my constituents in Beaches–East York to address what is absolutely an incredibly important issue. I want to thank the member opposite from Kitchener–Conestoga for bringing this bill forward so we can have this conversation during a private member's bill opportunity, to talk about what is, indeed, an extremely serious crisis.

I want to start by putting my heart out to the families of the loved ones who have been lost to drug addiction in general, to opioid crisis addictions and death, and particularly to fentanyl, which has become this silent, little killer that's affecting people across the country and the world.

It has crept up on us in the most pervasive sort of way. It's just landing at our door. We've had, no doubt, a very serious addiction and drug problem going back decades and decades, but the silent killer of a little fentanyl has made this so important and so immediate that all of us, I know, believe that we have in front of us an incredibly serious crisis, an opioid crisis that needs to be addressed.

I appreciate the member from Kitchener–Conestoga. This is not the be-all, end-all solution. This is one step in what will be and has to be a multifaceted approach to dealing with the issue.

I want to talk a little bit about a good friend of mine, almost a family member, who is out in Vancouver, BC, Donald MacPherson. Donald MacPherson is head of the Canadian Drug Policy Coalition and he has been an actor with addiction issues, men's health issues, men's awareness and men's personal issues for the last 30 years. He has formed a coalition that is seeking very radical changes to how we address the issue in order to find solutions to the issues.

He was just recently, in the last couple of days—he won a controversial award at Simon Fraser University. It's called the Nora and Ted Sterling Prize in Support of Controversy. He won it primarily because he is driving very unconventional policy solutions to address the drug problem, particularly the drug problem he witnesses on a daily basis in BC, on the Lower Eastside, and the kinds of community responses that have been necessary there to address this problem.

The theory behind this award is that it is given to people whose work provides and contributes to the understanding of controversy. His sense is, the law-and-order-style approach that we have taken towards drugs—drug addictions, drug enforcement—over the years simply is not working. His goal would be to see all drug substances decriminalized, to take the criminal element out of drugs—out of drug production, out of drug distribution, sale and use—so that people who are addicted can get the materials they need for their addiction from safe sources, and can use addictive materials in safe places so as to not come to undue harm.

This is an extremely controversial direction because, as we are now dealing with the concept of decriminal-

ization and the legalization of marijuana in Canada, he would like to see, basically, this happen for all addictive substances, advancing, as he has over the years, this controversial policy, because what we're doing now hasn't worked. Banning the pill presses—already happening, in a sense, from an importation point of view. You could be manufacturing them in Ontario; this would be another avenue to get at it. It's a question of who is managing those pill presses. They still have pill presses and will always have pill presses for the purposes of legitimate drug manufacturing and distribution. Those, ultimately, will find their ways into the hands of bad people who want to do bad things. I'm absolutely concerned about that.

One of the things that we don't talk enough about in this House is the courage of communities and families who come together around those who have found that their families have been devastated by an untimely death. In Beaches, we're not isolated. There have been far too many occasions. We have a number of families, and whether the death is the result of an addiction or a drug overdose or such, it's that community spirit of people who rally around and support the family with food, meal programs and such, in order to lessen the burden. Because, as we know with the opioid crisis, it is affecting people at such a young age: their mid-twenties and thirties and forties. I don't think any of us don't know of someone who's had an untimely demise.

We should appreciate that while banning the pill presses is a step, our government is doing a lot of other work in this area. The minister talked today about the investments that the province of Ontario is making in drug addiction initiatives, including almost over \$220 million in additional spending initiatives, including \$21 million available immediately to help community-based addiction services. We are giving naloxone, as much as we can—which is an immediate drug to help recover from an overdose—to pharmacies, free of charge, and to police and emergency service operators.

We see in BC how untrained volunteers are there taking action, who are probably doing something illegal in injecting strangers with a substance, but it's the only thing that's going to save their lives. You have that uneasy place of doing something that's necessary, even though you're not trained to do so.

I know the province of Ontario is taking this issue extraordinarily seriously. We will be supporting the bill as one step—or I will be, in any event. It is a free vote. I don't want to presume for all of the members on this side. I'll be very proud to support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much to my colleagues who spoke before me, but most of all, congratulations and thank you to my colleague Michael Harris from Kitchener-Conestoga.

1540

This is a very important issue. Make no mistake, it is probably the biggest crisis in drugs of our time—not just of our generation, of our time. This is the most deadly

drug available to man. It is more powerful than morphine and heroin put together. It could kill you the first time you take it. I think it's important that this is a private member's bill, but I would submit to this assembly that we need to have a larger discussion as members about this through an emergency debate because it is hitting each and every one of our constituencies and it is killing kids as young as 14 years old. That's why I'm proud to support this.

I first started raising the issue of fentanyl in 2012 after there were deaths in my community, in Manotick. I worked with the Royal Ottawa Hospital at the time and we were able to bring in a fentanyl opioid resource centre, but it's not enough.

Last February, my friend Sean O'Leary wrote an open letter that received international attention. He couldn't take it anymore. His 17-year-old daughter is addicted to fentanyl. He witnessed an overdose in his garage on New Year's Eve, and some of his daughter's friends died. We had a number of deaths last fall. Sean created something called We the Parents to bring parents together to help them facilitate and help the kids help themselves. I started raising this issue last February after I read his open letter. We hosted a community meeting together. I've asked him for some concrete steps for the Liberal government.

I do not believe this is a partisan issue. I believe anybody who thinks that should check their partisanship at that door. We have young kids here who are going to high schools and junior highs right across this province. When I met with Sean's daughter, and when I met with her friends, I asked them, "When did you start taking drugs?" One of the girls said she was 10 years old. That scared me. I have a 12-year-old who just started junior high.

My husband is with the St. John Ambulance, he's the national capital chair, and he has made sure that each of our cars has a naloxone kit in it in case we know anybody who's going to need it. Recently, when we dropped our daughter off for a sleepover with some of her friends, my husband looked at her and he said, "Don't take a pill." So to my pages here: You have your whole life in front of you. Don't take a pill.

That's why this is important. Yes, it is one of the tools in the toolbox. We need more information. We need to talk about education and awareness; we need more detox beds; we need more treatment facilities. We need to do so much more, but this is important, and I'll tell you why: because there is nothing more sinister in life than somebody taking and counterfeiting a pill and lacing it with something that could kill you. I think—and we've had this discussion—perhaps those folks should be charged with manslaughter if there is an overdose death. That's why we need to have that conversation.

But the one before us today is to support banning these pill presses and tougher penalties for those who are that sinister, who will go to Leila Attar from Ottawa and sell her a counterfeit Percocet, knowing that she could have died taking it. You know what she said to me today? The

reason she got off drugs? A very simple reason: She found out that to her drug dealer, all she was was \$60—\$60 to him.

I don't have much more time because I have other colleagues that want to speak, but I'll leave you with this one parting thing. A young girl in Ottawa who has become addicted to fentanyl through these fake Percocets left her home this summer, and some of the drug dealers tried to traffic her. So when we think about this issue as just a fatality or a possibility of a fatality, or when we look at some of these criminal issues—it is organized crime, and it is happening here in the great province of Ontario.

I support this bill and every measure that we are taking in this assembly today.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I too am glad to be able to add a few words to this debate. This bill allows us to talk about something that is so important and that hasn't been brought to the floor of the assembly enough. It allows us to talk about the devastating impact of the crisis going on with fentanyl in our province.

Fentanyl is an opioid. It's a painkiller. It can be used safely when it is used by a health care professional and taken as directed. But that's not what's happening right now. It is being counterfeited throughout our province and sold to people who are desperate. When you get your drugs from Satan's Choice and the Hells Angels, they don't care what's in it; they care about the 60 bucks. In my end of the world, it's 100 bucks, just so you know. They don't care. They see it as a profit-making affair. Yet we are left to pick up the pieces of this money-making affair, and that's 865 deaths last year. Every single one of these deaths was preventable.

To get there, we all agree that we will need a multi-faceted strategy to be effective and to have an impact. What the member is doing today is to take this one small step on a journey that will bring us to where we want to go, which is that there will be no more overdoses, there will be no more counterfeit pills, and there will be no more deaths.

I could not imagine why anybody would say, "Because it's a small step, let's not take it." That makes no sense. When I heard the Minister of Health this week talk about how we need a multi-faceted strategy and dismiss this small step, this is wrong-headed. Every small step counts. The member from Kitchener-Conestoga said it clearly: This is not the strategy to bring us to the end goal, but it is one step in that direction, and therefore it is worth taking. I would encourage all of my colleagues to do so.

In a way, it is our way to applaud the leadership of all of the health care workers out there in the trenches who are trying so hard to make a difference. I'm worried, Speaker. I'm worried that those health care workers, those harm reduction workers, are burning out trying to save their clients, their patients, because they never know if today is the last time they will see them. That is how

deadly this drug is. To people like you and me, to people like myself, who has never taken this drug, two grains of salt worth of that drug put into anything and I'm done; I'm dead. We all are. That is how deadly this is.

A small step on the road to bring us to a place where we will protect people from dying is a step worth taking. I know that it is a step that doesn't have to do with health care; it has to do with law enforcement. But this is part of a multi-faceted strategy that will bring us to where we want to go.

I'm glad we had this short opportunity to talk about this crisis, this short opportunity to show that any step that brings us in that direction is a step worth taking.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'm happy today to speak to Bill 126. I want to thank the member opposite for bringing this forward because I do believe that it does complement the efforts of this government.

The member from Nepean-Carleton spoke earlier about the crisis we have here in Ontario. There's no question that it's a crisis that is hitting many jurisdictions across this country and around the world. One of the main reasons is the cheapness of this drug and the accessibility that's out there.

I believe that if we look at the pill press as one piece of a multi-faceted plan, then, obviously, it's something that will complement a larger plan. The member opposite from the third party was saying that the Minister of Health dismissed this earlier this week. I disagree with that, because the Minister of Health has stood up in this Legislature for quite some time to talk about the approach this government wants to take.

This is not a partisan issue. I think all of us in this Legislature agree with it. I don't think anyone in this Legislature—and I'm not going to assume where people are going to vote and how they're going to vote, but I don't think anyone would disagree with the member's bill, that this is something that is good for Ontarians.

1550

I know that as a government we've put forward a plan that will invest an additional \$222 million into the health care system and for prevention services that will really look for ways to ensure that people are safe, and safer, here in Ontario.

Madam Speaker, I don't know if anyone noticed, but last week I missed a couple of days in the Legislature, and it was because I lost someone who was close to me because of fentanyl. In fact, in my community, there were two people who passed away on the weekend. I didn't know the other person. But this is something that hits every single community here in Ontario.

I remember earlier this year the member from Nepean-Carleton talking about the young people—I think it was three people within a two-week period—who died because of drug overdoses in their communities. This is an issue that is affecting young people in our community. In fact, I went to the Ministry of Health's website and used the tool that they have, the tracker, and

I was surprised to see the 65-plus category in that list as well. This is affecting all ages within our society and all parts of Ontario, and we as a Legislature need to rise to the occasion as leaders in our community, as people in whom citizens and constituents have put faith and sent us here in that old, traditional way to advocate on their behalf. We need to work together on this issue to find solutions.

I want to thank the member opposite for his bill. I think it is part of a larger plan. But we are going to continue to move forward in making sure that there is an educational component to what we are doing. We need to make sure—and the Minister of Health talked about this earlier in question period—that there are testing strips available for people, that naloxone is available for people. The minister has said that over 200 towns now have access to naloxone. I encourage all of the members here to make sure their folks on the ground have access to this as well. In addition to that, the minister suggests that we are going to delist high-strength, long-acting opioids. I'm not sure if that has been done yet, but I know it's something our government supports.

One of the pieces that I thought was very effective is making sure that there are people on the ground, support workers, to work with people who may be struggling with addiction to ensure that they have options presented to them and that there is guidance on the ground, because we are talking about mental health and addiction in many of these cases. Yes, there are cases where someone takes something and they assume that it's something else, but there is an addiction component to it.

We need to really have a multi-faceted approach to taking on this issue because, like the member from Nepean–Carleton said, this is a crisis unlike any we have ever seen here in this province when it comes to substances, illegal substances, that can hurt people. As the minister responsible for children and youth services, I want to make sure that we continue to build the type of Ontario that we can be proud of, where people can reach their full potential and be safe doing so.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I too am pleased to rise to speak to the Illegal Pill Press Act brought forward by my colleague from Kitchener–Conestoga. We are indeed in the midst of an opioid crisis. Between 2006 and 2015, fentanyl overdose deaths in Ontario soared by 548%. Last month, we got word that opioid-related deaths rose 19% in 2016 in Ontario.

Speaker, you may recall that after 15 fentanyl deaths in my hometown, North Bay leaders came up with the Patch4Patch program. It's a protocol that basically states that before you get a new fentanyl patch, you return the used patch undamaged. This Legislature adopted it province-wide, and since that time, fentanyl-related deaths have been stopped in their tracks in my hometown of North Bay. It has been zero. I relate this because it's my hope that the same kind of non-partisan lens can be used to move this bill forward.

I want to congratulate the member from Kitchener–Conestoga for taking the lead on this in his community. Last month, he and our leader Patrick Brown convened a local round table in his riding, which included senior law-enforcement officials, public health officials and community members.

When so many preventable deaths are occurring, we need to help protect our communities from the criminal activity of bootleg fentanyl, and one part of the solution is cracking down on illegal pill press machines. Bill 126 would prohibit anyone other than a pharmacist or a licence-holder from possessing a pill press.

This Legislature heard earlier all the details of this very important bill. But there are other things our party has said we can do as a result of the ongoing and growing crisis, as well as this pill-press bill:

- release weekly overdose reporting data to the public;

- create a ministerial task force to take urgent action to address the opioid crisis; and

- invest 10% of the \$57 million the government spends on advertising on an opioid education program.

But Bill 126 is before us today—right now, here—and we can move this bill forward today.

In closing, I want to read a letter from Sherry Albert of New Liskeard. Sadly, she wrote:

“In 2011, I lost my 19-year-old son to this tragic abuse of medication.

“He was a gentle young man with many plans, who was at the wrong place at the wrong time and, as many others, did not know the dangers of prescription medication.

“The police determined that fentanyl was sold to his friend for \$100.

“Since May 2011, I have heard of at least four more senseless, fentanyl-related deaths in our very small community. I, too, am afraid for our youth.

“My life has been forever changed and my heart eternally broken by the loss caused by this serious problem.”

It's a reminder there are families just like Sherry's all across this province who are hurting. Their anguish is very raw, very human and very real, and we, in this House, need to remember that. Michael Harris's Bill 126 will prevent someone else's death.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: I am also pleased to have the opportunity to have this conversation here in this House today. I would like to thank the member from Kitchener–Conestoga for bringing it forward. We all know that this is a small piece of this puzzle, but it's important that we have the conversations and that we look at every single challenge that's before us to ensure that we're keeping our community and our children safe.

I also want to congratulate and thank Leila Attar for being so brave. Leila found herself in a position that many of our kids could quite easily find themselves in. She was given something that she thought was one thing,

took it and realized very quickly that it was something else and that she was in danger. That could happen to our children. It is happening to our people in this province. This is a measure that could hopefully dampen some of that from continuing to happen.

We're seeing fentanyl in many different forms. Fentanyl has touched my family with the loss of my daughter's best friend. She unknowingly ingested fentanyl, and she's gone. She is not here with us today. I know that many people just here in this House have probably, in some way, been touched or have a third-person connection to someone who has been addicted to some form of drug or other.

There was a woman in Hamilton. Her name was Lenore Power. She was in the Hamilton media not long ago, a woman who broke her back. She was a business woman. She was a very successful woman. She broke her back, and the doctor prescribed opioids. Before she knows it, she's completely addicted. She's paying \$500 to \$700, I believe, a day to try to feed her habit.

What happens then? She can't keep it up any longer and she becomes a dealer. Luckily for Lenore, I'd have to say, she was arrested. It changed her life, and she realized where she had ended up in her life from this addiction and was able to turn that around and now share her story of addiction with the people of this province.

1600

The opioid crisis is happening and the deaths are reaching epidemic proportions in Ontario. In my city of Hamilton, we have some statistics. Last year, 52 people in Hamilton died of opioid toxicity. That's a death rate 48% higher than the provincial average. It's also a number that has been increasing year after year. Just since January 10 of this year, Hamilton paramedics have responded to 248 calls related to suspected opioid overdoses. This month has had the most number of calls in any month. We're only at the 21st of September and we are already over our numbers from years past.

The city of Hamilton has held an opioid response summit where they concluded that they are on the game and willing to tackle this and trying to do it, but they've asked the province for financial support, and I know they're looking forward to getting that response to come back to ensure that we are keeping people in this province safe. It's the right thing to do. Thank you to the member for bringing this forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: I commend my friend and Kitchener-Conestoga MPP Michael D. Harris for fighting to stop the production and proliferation of counterfeit opioids at the source, for taking action on illegal opioids.

His bill, Bill 126, the Illegal Pill Press Act, would prohibit the possession and use of a pill press machine by anyone other than an authorized pharmacist. It would also enable police to get warrants and seize the machines and hit dealers with fines up to \$500,000 plus jail time. It gives law enforcement the tools they need to combat this illicit and fatal pill-manufacturing trade.

These so-called death machines allow the user to manually press different types of granulated raw material to make it into a single pill or tablet, later to be sold by organized crime. A single machine can produce a staggering number of illegal pills, about 15,000 pills an hour, which is why we need to ban the source of their production.

Consider how easy it is to source the pill machine online, as my colleague has said. I Googled it just moments ago and want to share with anyone who is still in doubt: "Press your own pills for \$586.99. 47 sold. Free shipping too"—deplorable. What's even scarier are the viewings, which are usually sorted, ironically, under health and beauty pages. Each ad was being viewed by anywhere from 60 to 100 people at a time, and there are thousands of ads online for illegal pill press machines.

Clearly, organized crime is proliferating, and it's profiting in human misery and death, and we have to stop it. All of us have a duty to stop it. It's a crisis—two deaths per day. It's fatal. I implore all of the pages, all of the young people, every single person watching out here to just say no, especially to fentanyl. Fentanyl is so fatal. Sadly, two friends of my sons, Zach and Ben, have died from these horrific opioids, from fentanyl specifically. A little smidgeon is enough to kill you instantaneously. I know it really impacted my boys. They came home and they just couldn't understand why people would play Russian roulette. In the blink of an eye, their friends were gone. May they rest in peace.

We haven't even discussed the impacts and suffering of babies born to opioid-dependent mothers or mothers medicating for chronic pain—infants who, as a result of their parent's addiction to painkillers like fentanyl, are born with severe withdrawal and had to be started on morphine to stop their seizures. The medical term for it is neonatal abstinence syndrome. More than 950 are born to opioid-addicted mothers in a year, according to Ontario's Provincial Council for Maternal and Child Health.

I want to, as many of my colleagues have done, commend advocate Leila Attar, who spoke this morning and shared her story during Michael's media scrum. Leila, thank you so much for being brave and standing up. I'm so fortunate and happy that you're still here with us. Even though someone gave you a pill that they knew could kill you, I'm so glad that you're here and for speaking up.

Madam Speaker, I ask the Minister of Health and all of his Liberal colleagues to please do the right thing: Support my colleague Michael's act, Bill 126, the Illegal Pill Press Act. For all of the people today, we all have a duty to say no. Illicit opioid drugs are fatal. They're killing our youth. They're killing our friends and our family members. There is nothing worth—as Leila said, \$60 is all that person valued her life at. That's deplorable. It's absolutely disgusting. Every one of us has to do our due diligence. We all have to take a piece of this and help. Michael's act is going to certainly give law enforcement the tools, but we all have to say no to illicit, illegal opioid drugs.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I will return to the member from Kitchener-Conestoga to wrap up.

Mr. Michael Harris: I want to, first off, thank the third party, the NDP caucus, and the Liberal caucus for their comments, and our own Lisa, Bill and Vic for their comments. I think this just shows how personal an issue this crisis actually is here in the province of Ontario. We heard personal stories from the minister and my colleague from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, about how this crisis has impacted close friends.

I asked members today this one question: If we could save just one life, why wouldn't we step in the right direction and move to support an initiative that would actually help take these illicit, counterfeit pills off our streets?

I accept that this isn't going to solve our opioid crisis problem. It's not going to. We are limited, of course, with the tools that we have as private members, but I believe that this one step to give tools to law enforcement will assist in removing those counterfeit opioids from our streets, opioids that were sold for \$60—\$60 that could have killed Leila's life.

I want to say thanks, also, to those who provided input on this bill: My good friend York Regional Police Staff Sergeant Sony Dosanjh, who assisted in this and let me know that they've got a bill over in Alberta—MLA Mike Ellis also moved an illegal pill press act in Alberta, and it's now law there; Detective Ian Young of the Waterloo Regional Police Service; our own Waterloo Regional Police Service Chief Bryan Larkin; RCMP Sergeant Eric Boechler; OPP Detective Sergeant Lee Fulford; my own Queen's Park staff, Kate Ivanchenko and Rob Willett; of course, OLIP intern Alex Overton, who was great on this bill, as well as Sydney Oakes; and even my own sister, Jennifer Harris, who helped advise me on how tragic a situation this is in our province.

Again, I thank those in attendance today. I look forward to all of you voting to just save that one life.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

TRANSPARENCY IN GAS PRICING ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE DANS LA FACTURATION DU GAZ

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We will deal first with ballot item number 67, standing in the name of Mr. McNaughton.

Mr. McNaughton has moved second reading of Bill 146, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 to provide transparency in gas pricing. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it.

We're going to be voting on this item at the end of this.

FIREFIGHTERS

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Ms. French has moved private member's notice of motion number 65. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried. Congratulations.

Motion agreed to.

ILLEGAL PILL PRESS ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR LES PRESSES À COMPRIMER ILLÉGALES

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Harris has moved second reading of Bill 126, An Act to amend the Drug and Pharmacies Regulation Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to turn to the member. Which committee?

Mr. Michael Harris: General government.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Agreed? Agreed.

I'm going to call for the bells. It will be five minutes.

The division bells rang from 1609 to 1614.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Members, please take your seats.

TRANSPARENCY IN GAS PRICING ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE DANS LA FACTURATION DU GAZ

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. McNaughton has moved second reading of Bill 146, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 to provide transparency in gas pricing.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing to be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnett, Ted	Hatfield, Percy	Tabuns, Peter
Coe, Lorne	MacLeod, Lisa	Taylor, Monique
Fedeli, Victor	McNaughton, Monte	Vanthof, John
French, Jennifer K.	Miller, Norm	Walker, Bill
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Paul	
Harris, Michael	Smith, Todd	

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Anderson, Granville	Dickson, Joe	McMahon, Eleanor
Baker, Yvan	Dong, Han	Potts, Arthur
Colle, Mike	Hoskins, Eric	Qadri, Shafiq
Coteau, Michael	Hunter, Mitzie	Thibeault, Glenn
Damerla, Dipika	MacCharles, Tracy	
Delaney, Bob	Martins, Cristina	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 16; the nays are 16.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay, I have to return to the member: Which committee?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'll send the bill to SCOFEA, please.

Interjection: Finance.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Finance—sorry.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Agreed? Agreed.

municipality. More recently, the Ministry of Natural Resources has ordered the town to “implement a permanent solution” to the problem. That’s precisely what the town of Erin council and staff are trying to do.

A municipal class environmental assessment was completed in November of last year, and the EA concluded that the best option was to rehabilitate the earthen berm dam and replace the bridge and stop-log control structure and spillway. It needs to be pointed out that the county of Wellington is the owner of the adjacent property, which includes the spillway structure.

In addition, the county is currently renovating a nearby heritage property to become the new Hillsburgh public library. The project is well under way. Most local residents will need to cross the Station Street bridge in order to have convenient access to the new library when it is soon completed.

The mayor of Erin, Al Alls, has recently written to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change seeking a meeting with the minister to discuss the Station Street environmental assessment. I urge the minister to respond as soon as he can and arrange a meeting with the mayor forthwith. I know that the staff of the Ministers of Municipal Affairs, Natural Resources, and the Environment are monitoring this debate. I urge them to review this matter over the next few days and contact the town early next week to seek a way to help.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's such a pleasure to do questions and comments a week later, after the member from Oxford has already given his hour lead; it certainly tests the memory. That's why we have Hansard, and we can go back and take a look.

I recall being here when he gave his lead, and if I look at Hansard, the member from Oxford said, “There are still too many questions that haven’t been answered, such as what the impact would be on the housing shortage. We haven’t seen a single study or analysis from the government.”

1620

“Would the Attorney General please provide the percentage of cases in which the Ontario Municipal Board approved or found in favour of a development that was previously denied by the municipality.” That was a question on the order paper, Speaker. The response that the member from Oxford received from the government was that the government doesn’t track that information.

“That means that, once again,” according to the member from Oxford, “they are introducing legislation without doing the research or knowing how well the current system is working. Once again, they are making significant changes without doing the proper research to know what the impact will be.”

The member from Oxford did say, “We agree with the need to reform the Ontario Municipal Board. The question we need to debate here is not whether to reform it, but how.” He went to say, “How do we ensure communities have a greater say in their neighbourhoods? At

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUILDING BETTER COMMUNITIES AND CONSERVING WATERSHEDS ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 VISANT À BÂTIR DE MEILLEURES COLLECTIVITÉS ET À PROTÉGER LES BASSINS HYDROGRAPHIQUES

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 14, 2017, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 139, An Act to enact the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal Act, 2017 and the Local Planning Appeal Support Centre Act, 2017 and to amend the Planning Act, the Conservation Authorities Act and various other Acts / Projet de loi 139, Loi édictant la Loi de 2017 sur le Tribunal d’appel de l’aménagement local et la Loi de 2017 sur le Centre d’assistance pour les appels en matière d’aménagement local et modifiant la Loi sur l’aménagement du territoire, la Loi sur les offices de protection de la nature et diverses autres lois.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I’m glad to have this chance to compliment the member for Oxford, who has made a fine presentation on Bill 139. As we know, this bill amends a long list of provincial statutes, including the Municipal Act and the Conservation Authorities Act.

I wish to draw the attention of the House, and in particular the Ministers of Municipal Affairs, Natural Resources, and the Environment, to an important issue which involves the town of Erin, the county of Wellington and the Credit Valley Conservation Authority—an issue that has gone unresolved for far too long and requires the application of creativity and common sense by the provincial government to broker a solution.

The Station Street bridge and dam in the hamlet of Hillsburgh at the upper west Credit River in the town of Erin is an aging structure which needs to be rehabilitated and reconstructed. In fact, as far back as 1971, the need for a comprehensive rehabilitation was identified in the

the same time, how do we help planned developments get through the system faster so we can address the housing shortage? How do we ensure the new legislation respects municipalities?"

I'm sure we'd all like to have the answers to some of those questions, Speaker. I look forward to the debate this afternoon and perhaps we'll be enlightened by the members of the government who do take part.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I know, coming from the city of Mississauga, which, in terms of planning, has made its share of oversights and short-sighted decisions, but on the whole has done an excellent job down through the decades, the major appeal of this particular bill, Bill 139, the Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act, is, of course, the revamping of the much disliked Ontario Municipal Board.

This bill proposes replacing that body with an entity called the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal. This proposed new body, which would replace the Ontario Municipal Board, would give communities a stronger voice in how they grow and ensure that people have access to faster, fairer and, most importantly, more affordable hearings.

What had become such a problem in the past is that developers would make one set of proposals at city council and city council would say, "That's completely incompatible with our plan for growth," and then the developers would make an entirely different proposal at the Ontario Municipal Board and it would cost the city—not just my city but other cities—millions of dollars in legal fees over the years and a protracted period of time in which they would be before the Ontario Municipal Board opposing a proposal that was entirely different than that with which they had been presented.

Over the years, some of the really egregious practices have been curtailed, but this new proposal would in fact give even greater weight to the decisions of local communities while also ensuring that development and growth, which we need, occur in a way that's not merely good for the city but good for the province and good for our futures.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment.

Mr. Bill Walker: I had the pleasure to speak to Bill 139, the Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act, 2017, a couple of weeks ago or a week ago. I'm going to repeat a lot of what I said at that time because I think it's very important to the people of my area of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

I met with the Grey Sauble Conservation Authority and the executive directors of both of the associations. What they really said to me was they're very concerned continually that this government continues to give them more decrees, more directives of things they need to do to protect the watershed, which they're all about, but they never give them any more money, Mr. Speaker.

We need to ensure, from my perspective, obviously, that we steward our lands, and water sources particularly. I think both of our agencies in our neck of the woods, in Huron-Bruce and Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, do that. At the end of the day, though, you can't continue to add things to a list, add more decrees, add more directives, and continually not add more money to the pie. It's just not reality. That's what we hear often, time and again.

The other piece they shared with me is that they're concerned about the government being able to appoint people. At this point, only about 10% of the actual money to operate our conservation authorities is paid by the provincial government, but they want to be able to say, "We're going to place someone on your board. We're going to appoint someone at our leisure, even though the municipalities are paying 90 percent of the freight."

At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, I think this is wrong. I think we need to stand up and say to the government that you talk a lot about the environment, you talk a lot about the environmental protection that you're proud to do, you have talked but don't actually follow with action—as with many of the things that we see from this government. In this case, we want to ensure that we see something from them, an action. We want to see them support it, with money in the budget the next time. There have been many years without any increases. They can't continue to go that way without some help from the provincial government. I hope that they will do the right thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments for that round. I return to the member from Oxford for his reply.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you to the members from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, Mississauga-Streetsville, Windsor-Tecumseh, and you, Mr. Speaker, the member from Wellington-Halton Hills. I want to say that in your presentation, in your two minutes that you spoke to it—I think it's a case like yours that you spoke about, and one might question whether you were relating directly to my presentation of a week ago. But the truth is that your situation may very well require the services of one of the bodies that we have been talking about in this bill. But I'm not sure at this point, Mr. Speaker, whether the people in Wellington-Halton Hills or the people at Queen's Park would be aware of which one of the three bodies would be required to deal with that situation, whether it is the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal, the local planning body or the Ontario Municipal Board.

That's the point I want to touch on. The member of Mississauga-Streetsville mentioned it, too. But I want to point out that the confusion is created because we are trying to rename the Ontario Municipal Board, when all they had to do in this bill was change the parameters of the way the Ontario Municipal Board works. Then they wouldn't need that.

The local body that is being appointed—the city of Toronto has one already—they could have made that available to all municipalities. Let the Ontario Municipal

Board remain, and they could have had the appeals based only on the two criteria, whether it's the provincial policy or the local plan that is being contravened. That's all the OMB would do. But there's no need to change the OMB and cause the confusion.

I mentioned in my presentation the confusion when the city of Toronto made the mistake of calling the tribunal the same body that they have already appointed, which was not the case. There were a few other municipalities we mentioned where they used the wrong name. Most people that I have talked to believe that the tribunal is going to be appointed by the local people, because it's called a local planning tribunal. It is a province-appointed body identical to the OMB, only with a different name.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It is indeed a pleasure to stand here late on a Thursday afternoon to represent the good folks back in my riding of Windsor—Tecumseh on this issue. In Windsor—Tecumseh, we know quite a bit about the OMB. We have had our wins and losses and our good fights over the years. We also know a good bit about conservation authorities. We have a very good conservation authority within the Essex region.

This proposed Bill 139 has the title of the Building Better Communities and Conserving Water Sheds Act, and it basically comes in two parts: abolishing the Ontario Municipal Board and then replacing it with a Local Planning Appeal Tribunal. That's the first part. Then, almost as an afterthought, we deal with some of the changes to the way our 36 conservation authorities do their business.

As I have mentioned in this provincial Parliament in the past, I have a great deal of respect for the men and women who work on behalf of our conservation authorities. I have mentioned that I spent seven years on the board of the Essex Region Conservation Authority—one of the very best in all of Ontario, I should add. They do wonderful work in protecting our part of the planet, protecting our watersheds, making our environment a better place by planting thousands and thousands of trees every year, and educating our citizens, especially our young children, about the need to treat our natural heritage better than we've done ourselves.

1630

I believe that most of us would agree that conservation authorities have played a vital role, for more than 70 years, in supporting the restoration, conservation, development and management of Ontario's natural resources. They provide a wide variety of science-based watershed management programs and services, and this is all done in partnership with our municipalities, our landowners, environmental agencies and all three orders of good government. In a nutshell, conservation authorities are valuable watershed-based natural resource managers, and we should all be very glad that we have them, or we'd have to invent them all over again.

This bill brings about some changes in the way they do their business. It brings clarity.

By the way, I have a granddaughter named Clarity. Every time I hear in this House that we need more clarity in a bill, I think of my beautiful granddaughter.

It brings clarity and accountability as well as consistency in programs and services. It sets out a process. For example, should we, at some point in the future, decide to enlarge the boundaries or dissolve or amalgamate specific authorities, they'll have to establish advisory boards, if they don't already have them, and encourage members with professional expertise in areas under their control.

This is an area—and I know the member from Oxford has dealt with it at some length as well. As a board member of a conservation authority for seven years, this gives me some angst. We had all the members of Essex county council and the city of Windsor—we all had representatives on the conservation authority because we were all the co-funders. Normally, I know in Windsor's case, we had four councillors. The other municipalities had at least two—no, Pelee Island had one. So these are the funders of the conservation authority.

This new law, it seems to me, doesn't talk about expanding the board, but it says that the board should have membership with professionals from expertise areas that the conservation authority deals with, be that science, be that watershed management, be that biological—whatever it is. My question is, who is going to appoint them? If they make decisions that are contrary to a municipality's ability to pay for those decisions, there's going to be, it seems to me, a great deal of conflict. So I have some concerns about that aspect of the bill. I'd like to hear more about it, and perhaps we will. If we don't hear it in the House, perhaps we'll hear it in committee when we get to clause-by-clause, if we get to that stage.

The fees charged for any service should be posted—that makes a lot of sense—and come with a reasonable explanation of why that fee is necessary. I've heard of cases elsewhere where people go in to get something done by their conservation authority and they're astounded at the fee they have to pay because they didn't know about it. I believe it's incumbent upon conservation authorities to have those fees posted and to explain in a reasonable way why the cost is that much.

They're also getting tougher on those who violate or contravene aspects of the Conservation Authorities Act. Those who violate or contravene the act will be subject to heavier fines, and the courts will be given new powers—or orders are issued for offenders to repair or rehabilitate any damage they may have caused. Again, that makes sense to me.

Conservation Ontario is generally supportive of the changes. They work in several ways. Their work ties in with the Ontario Municipal Board when it comes to land use planning. They have conservation authorities, Speaker, which have significant expertise, often being delegated to represent provincial interests regarding natural hazard policies, for example, within the provincial policy statement, and that's just one example I would mention this afternoon.

Conservation authorities also recognize just how important it is to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions as

we struggle to adapt to a changing climate. Lord knows, down in Windsor we've been struggling lately with the changing climate, with all of the terrible rainstorms we've had—more than 6,000 homes being flooded, I think, just in the city of Windsor, let alone the town of Tecumseh, the town of LaSalle, the town of Lakeshore.

In the surrounding area in the city of Windsor, the mayor says we had \$175 million worth of damage and we're in somewhat of a dispute now with the insurance people whether they should be covering all of that damage or not. Unfortunately, the provincial disaster relief plan came in some time in the last century, before climate change really got to be what it is today, and they had strict limitations then that don't really seem to apply at this stage—I'll get to that in a moment.

This bill will cause municipalities, among other things, to come up with official plans—most of them already have them—plans that identify goals, objectives and actions as we plan better approaches on the climate change front.

These new land planning appeal tribunals will be very different than the old OMB in many ways. For one thing, they won't be as adversarial. They'll have much less power to overturn decisions made by elected municipal leaders. It's important to stress the "elected" part there, because municipalities have long put five or 10 years into coming up with a plan, it's pushed through their city council after wide consultation, it conforms with the provincial policy statement, it comes out, and the developer appeals it and the OMB steps in, throws out all the work that's gone on, does a hearing and says, "Yes, we'll let the developer have what the developer wants." That, I believe, has led to where we are today.

There will be a separate system—actually, a support centre—that will provide legal and planning advice for citizens challenging planning decisions. It's a brave new world when it comes to planning matters in Ontario, Speaker. Well, perhaps I should say that the potential is there for a brand new system.

This bill, Bill 139, joins approximately 72 other bills that will start at the second reading stage in this session, so it may never see the light of day under this government. We may never bring it back for final reading before the next election, and even if we do, many of the provisions will depend on regulations. These could fall short or not live up to their hype, and since many of them will come into effect only upon proclamation, it leaves open the possibility that some may not come into effect at all.

I can't say enough about the need for more attention being given to the impact of climate change. As I've mentioned, we have seen the horrendous results right across the country. The flood that hit Calgary in 2013: There were estimates of \$5 billion in damage, and insurable claims hit \$1.7 billion. Last year in Fort McMurray, Alberta, that forest fire: an estimated \$9 billion in damages, and insurable payouts somewhere between \$3.6 billion and \$4.7 billion. And, as I say, just last month in my community, more than 6,000 homes flooded in

Windsor, several hundred more in Tecumseh, Lakeshore and LaSalle—\$175 million in damages in Windsor alone.

We're just not used to these storms. We used to predict they'd only come along about once every hundred years. Now it seems it's every year or every second year. Our disaster recovery assistance programs have guidelines to help homeowners recover, but those rules, when they were written, were to follow storm events that don't even measure up to what we're seeing these days. The rules to follow were written before climate change upped the ante.

1640

The one that really gets me is that homeowners aren't covered for sewer backups. When the streets are flooded and you have a foot or two of water on the streets—or more—and when the sewers are already filled to the top, they overflow and they flow back into the homes. Sometimes even with the backflow prevention valves, depending on the type of valve that you have, the flap opens and the water comes back in.

Now, these are catastrophic rain events, and the system, Speaker, as you know—the municipal leaders want to declare a state of emergency, and they do and they ask the province to agree with them. Most times the province agrees. It says, "Yes, you're in a state of emergency. I can't believe the size of the disastrous storm down there." Then they release the application forms for disaster recovery assistance funding, but with so many restrictions, only a relative few of the people who apply will actually get any government funding at all.

My leader, Andrea Horwath, was in Windsor a couple of weeks ago with the member from Essex, the member from Windsor West and myself, and we went around the flood area with the mayor, Mayor Drew Dilkens. As we were talking to the media, with all of this furniture and stuff on the lawns behind us that was hauled out of flooded basements, a lady from next door came over and said, "You know, I've been flooded, but in that house over there, there's a lady in her nineties. She went through the flood assistance program last year, and she got a cheque from the government"—I won't say I'm going to give you an exact number. It was either \$2 and some cents or \$4 and some cents.

I was astounded at the value of the cheque being \$2 or \$4, as to how much time went into looking at that application, going over the forms to see which part was in compliance, having somebody paid at a good civil service rate of pay to do that, and then have somebody actually issue a cheque and mail it, and it was for only \$2 or \$4. Can you imagine this nice lady, a senior in her nineties, having flood damage, expecting some help from her government, sees the letter come in the mail, opens the letter, looks at the cheque and says, "Hey, I got a cheque from the government," and it's \$2 or \$4? I don't know why we do stuff like that; I just don't know why. You have to give your head a shake. I don't get it. It would have cost more to put out that cheque, to handle all those forms, do the verification right and mail that cheque.

What we need, and I hope this bill will lead to this, is a conversation about ways the system needs to be improved. My basement was flooded last year, Speaker. I put in a claim with my insurance for \$60,000. We lost everything. We lost the spare bedroom, we lost the office, we lost my mother-in-law's dining room set. We lost it all. Big, heavy leather furniture—the whole bit. After going through that, I can relate to what the people are going through these days. But when you go through that, and you go through the handling of the forms, you do the verification and all of that, you run into a provincial disaster assistance recovery program that says, "Well, we're not going to cover any damage that was caused when the sewer backed up."

That was written, as I say, in the last century. The sewers don't normally back up unless there's a major problem, a major storm, a disaster, as verified by the municipality and the provincial government. Climate change is real. These days, in these heavy, heavy storms that we're getting—and we've seen them in Whitby, we've seen them in Burlington, we've seen them in Ottawa, we've seen them in Windsor, we've seen them all across the province. Sewer backups are the norm in these heavy rainstorms. The backflow valves don't always work, and some insurance companies refuse to offer flood coverage in floodplain areas, or they cap any payments at \$5,000. You talk to the insurance people and they say, "Well, it's right there in the small print. It's right there on the renewal form. Perhaps you missed it". Most of us just get a form in the mail that says, "Time to renew your insurance. Sign here." We sign it and that's it. We don't take the time—and I guess it's our own fault—to read all of those pages. We just take for granted that we've always been covered for everything we started out with.

I know there was a big—I shouldn't call it a scandal, but it was big news a year ago when people who lost much more than I did thought they would be fully covered and were notified that they either had no coverage or the coverage was capped at \$5,000. That took a lot of people by surprise. So we're a little bit anxious down in my area about the need, when we're talking about changes to the way we build our homes, the way we go through the land approval processes, the development process—we're a little bit more sensitive, perhaps, than in other parts of the province at the moment. But we all agree that climate change is here to stay, and we need to do so much more to find ways to deal with it.

I was telling you about the good folks at the Essex Region Conservation Authority, Speaker. My former colleagues on the board have approved a go-ahead plan with a regional climate change strategy. They'll be hiring a team of outside consultants to help out. The general manager, Richard Wyma, says it could mean building new wetlands, stricter rules on developers, changes to traditional methods of farming. And, of course, it could mean that we build different, maybe larger, sewer infrastructure. It will be a long-term plan and there are many pieces to the puzzle. We have to look at the integration of these varied pieces on a regional scale.

According to Adelle Loiselle at Blackburn News, Mr. Wyma says, "Preparing for climate change is about managing risks. It is as much about the economy, quality of life, and social inequality as about the environment. Innovative solutions will need to expand beyond the boundaries of engineering to be truly sustainable." I think that's a challenge that faces us all. When we get here and we look at bills and ways that we want to improve the lives of everyday people, our ordinary citizens, we have to come up with ways after they have experienced some disaster where we can comfort them and say to them, "You know what? We need to change the rules, we need to change the guidelines, because the system that we have in place and have had in place for a long time simply isn't working for you."

It takes all of us—and I mean all of us on the government side as well—to agree that the system isn't working. It's no good ducking your head in the sand and saying, "But that's the guideline, that's the plan: Qualify or be disqualified." If it's happening more and more and more, surely somebody over there can say, "I think they're right; I think we should change the plan."

I know the good folks at AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, are optimistic about this proposed bill. President Lynn Dollin has written the minister. AMO holds the opinion that the proposed changes should bring about a more streamlined process with less administrative burden and shorter time frames. It will promote the value of the local council decision and enhance stability in the planning regime.

1650

Having said that, President Dollin shares a few concerns with the minister. She suggests an amendment to remove references to other legislation, because in the past, planners had to sift through something like 100 different pieces of legislation, regulations and guidelines to get to the core, to find the relevant provincial policy. AMO wants the provincial policy statement amended to include all planning policy.

AMO also tells the minister that more thought needs to be given to the 90-day time limit, suggesting 120 days is more appropriate.

Finally, President Dollin says that if this new process is to work, everyone has to be pulling in the same direction. There needs to be a commitment on the part of the province to work with local planners to discuss the application of provincial interest as amendments are processed. This would take frank dialogue, and local opinions need to be considered. In other words, the province needs to give a clear indication of their priority, or if the local counsel can choose among competing priorities.

Meaningful discussion and openness on both sides needs to be a matter of routine to strengthen the local government's ability to make decisions in keeping with provincial plans and policies. AMO also calls for an evaluation period two years into the new procedures.

Speaker, I don't know if you heard about what's going on in London these days, but the city of London is taking

a special interest in this bill, and for good reason. Five years ago, they started the public planning sessions for a new official plan. They engaged the community, they consulted the experts, and they adopted what they call, naturally, the London Plan, and the province signed off on it last December. It's been accepted by the province. Once that happened—in the old process, you had appeals to the OMB—42 appeals were initiated. That's not bad, considering the depth of the plan, but the appeals are under the old guidelines and this bill has new restrictions on what can be appealed.

This new bill is a streamlined process, designed to save time and money. So London wants, now that this bill is in front of us—and, Speaker, I agree with London—the London Plan to fall under the new revised guidelines. Because of this transition, there is a provision in there that allows for the minister to make that determination. The minister can decide, “Oh, we’ll leave it under the old plan,” or “We’ll do it under the new plan,” because of the new guidelines that are in there, which restrict certain things that can be appealed under an official plan that has been adopted by an elected municipality.

The minister has already signed off on the plan, and it took four years, at that point, before the minister signed off on it and approved of it. There were numerous revisions. It took a long time—like I say, four years—but now it’s ready to roll. It was four years until he signed off on it; now it’s five years. London says that the new local planning tribunal should listen to any appeals that qualify under the new guidelines, and if not, the city of London suggests that the old OMB would have to stay in place on a parallel track for a year or more as the appeals grind their way through the old system, the old method. These are some of the rules they allowed for the *de novo* hearings, which put the approved plans back at square one—which led to the abolition of the OMB, in my humble opinion—while the new system uses a test of reasonableness that looks at whether the elected council followed its own rules and practices in developing the official plan. So here’s to London for staying on top of something that they’ve been working on for the past five years.

Speaker, it’s always good to take a look at how we got here, how this bill came to be. What were the factors that led to this important piece of legislation?

We only have to go back a few years—well, I’ll start five years ago; I’ll go back to June of 2012. You may remember this, Speaker. There was a story in the Toronto Star. The headline posed the question, was the OMB “Good for Developers, Bad for Cities?” The story by Kate Allen was framed by a photo of Toronto councillors Kristyn Wong-Tam and Josh Matlow. They were leading the fight at that time to remove Toronto from the jurisdiction of the OMB, to get Toronto right out of the OMB’s shadow altogether.

The story quoted other Toronto councillors, of course. Mary-Margaret McMahon, for example, was quoted on the OMB, saying those are “the scariest three letters known to humankind.”

My friend the late Pam McConnell, with whom I spent a good deal of time on the national board of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, was never known to cushion her words. When asked about the OMB, Pam said, “It’s the kiss of death.” We miss Pam.

Councillor Matlow said it could ruin your business, that “this affects whether you’re going to have a shadow over your tomato garden in your backyard,” or “a ruinous commute, or any number of quality-of-life issues.”

City councillors in Toronto had voted back in February of 2012 to ask the province to quash the OMB’s planning power over the city. That vote, by the way, was passed 34 to 5. That’s a pretty majority decision on a council as divided as the city of Toronto. That vote came on the heels of one in the previous year in Mississauga, and other representatives in other medium to large cities were considering the same kind of request.

Speaker, I mentioned this was back in 2012. At that time, my friend the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Mr. Milczyn, was still a councillor, and he was peeved at the OMB as well. That’s because of the decision of an issue on Dundas Street West. They held months of community meetings. Design workshops and staff in the transportation department and in the planning office had invested countless hours on a project that set a cap of six storeys on new buildings. They had citizens on the advisory committee and development representatives, including one from a company called Dunpar Homes.

Within a year, Dunpar was back for an application for a seven-storey condo development. Although the city said no, you know as well as I do, Speaker, what the OMB did: Of course, they gave the developer the seven storeys after all the work that went into the plan for six.

Mr. Milczyn, a councillor at the time, was quoted as saying, “Why bother going through the processes (and) consulting the public? It just makes a mockery out of the whole thing.” That’s how he felt at that time.

Here’s another interesting piece in that Kate Allen Toronto Star story from 2012. She says that Councillor “Milczyn doesn’t want to abolish the OMB ... but he wants stricter rules about what can be appealed.” So maybe now he’s got six of one, half a dozen of the other.

A couple of months before this story was written, Councillors Wong-Tam, Milczyn and Matlow met with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The minister at that time was Kathleen Wynne, the member from Don Valley West. Minister Wynne is quoted in that story as saying, “We don’t have any intention of abolishing the OMB. But I’m always open to suggestions and I’m certainly listening to people’s concerns.” That was in 2012.

1700

That minister has changed jobs in the government, as you know. That minister has had a lot of consultations, as you know. And so, although at the time she didn’t want to abolish the OMB, she has been listening.

For the purpose of this narrative, Speaker, allow me to jump ahead just for a moment. I’ll jump ahead in the

timeline and quote from a story by Jeff Gray in the *Globe and Mail* back in April of this year. I don't know if you remember, but that's when the Liberals were still mulling over which reforms they might introduce. This might explain why this bill came to be on the government table today. Here's a quote which may explain the reasons behind this piece of legislation:

"Critics have been pressing the province for years to either scrap or radically restructure the OMB, which hears applications from developers trying to build projects over the objections of local city planners or residents.

"With Premier Kathleen Wynne's government sinking low in opinion polls and an election due next year, that pressure intensified in recent weeks after a controversy erupted over a 35-storey condo tower approved next to John Fisher Junior Public School near Yonge Street and Eglinton Avenue in Ms. Wynne's midtown Toronto riding. The project has prompted vocal protests from parents, the school board and Toronto mayor John Tory, who called the project 'preposterous.'"

Speaker, thank you for allowing that little detour in my timeline.

Let me go to an opinion piece written by Rosario Marchese in the *Toronto Star* in September 2013, four years ago. At that time, as you know, Mr. Marchese was the hard-working member from Trinity-Spadina. He was taking exception to an OMB decision that allowed an illegal addition to be added to a home in his riding, and that prompted Mr. Marchese to introduce a private member's bill to set Toronto free from the OMB and to put local land use planning policy back into the hands of locally elected government. He wrote:

"The OMB does not uphold the rules. It makes up its own rules....

"If you remember your civics class, in a democracy only the elected branches of government are supposed to create policy and write laws."

Speaker, here's the nub of Rosario's complaint: The OMB is not a court, a Legislature, or a ministry; it is a fourth branch of government, unelected and accountable to no one.

Mr. Marchese, as you know, spent more than a few years in this Legislature. He always had a really good memory, God bless.

In this piece in the *Toronto Star*, he wrote:

"Since the government gave the OMB its policy-making power, the government ought to be able to take it back. And until very recently, the provincial government indeed had the power to set aside an OMB decision. This is how citizens pressured Bill Davis into overturning the OMB decision that approved the Spadina Expressway.

"But inexplicably"—get this, Speaker—the Liberal government in 2009 "gave away its power to review OMB decisions. This astonishing abdication removed the last safety valve that offered at least some democratic accountability over the unelected OMB's policy-making power."

Remember, this was carried in the *Toronto Star* back in 2013.

He continued:

"The people of Waterloo region are now bearing the consequences of that decision.

"The region spent 10 years developing an official plan that would curb urban sprawl and encourage transit-friendly, compact development. The region's official plan had the support of the community, local elected officials and was approved by the provincial government.

"But," Mr. Marchese wrote, "earlier this year, the OMB ignored the official plan and approved a sprawling development that was more than 10 times bigger than what was allowed.

"By dismissing the plan's restrictions on urban sprawl, the OMB effectively created new planning policy. This was contrary to municipal rules and the provincial government's own *Places to Grow Act*, which was supposed to prevent the exact sort of urban sprawl the OMB had just approved."

Let me wrap up Mr. Marchese's article with his comment: "Not content to overrule municipal governments, now the OMB is overruling the provincial government as well!"

Mr. Bill Walker: God bless.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: God bless.

Speaker, maybe, just maybe, this was to be one of the final straws on the back of the OMB's camel, because that ruling sparked municipal outrage right across Ontario.

I know you will enjoy this next article, because it was written in response to an opinion piece predating that OMB decision and its subsequent appeal, which ended in a compromise that still favoured the developers.

The next piece was written by a former vice-chair of the Ontario Municipal Board, Susan B. Campbell, who was a resident of Kitchener and who knew the ins and outs of that controversy from all sides. She reminds us that 12 years ago, in 2005, the Liberal government enacted the *Places to Grow Act* to ensure that land use planning happened in a "co-ordinated and strategic way," which was followed by the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe area a year later. That plan recognized that communities such as the Waterloo region had a dynamic future because it was growing so fast, and something had to be done about the expected traffic congestion that would follow and how that would lead to a loss of agricultural land and likely affect the quality of the air we breathe and the water we drink in that area.

So what those plans did was establish targets for the intensification and densities for any new developments. It forced municipalities in the region to respect these goals because they were, after all, provincial targets, and provincial regulations had to be followed after the growth plans were adopted.

Waterloo region had no option but to adopt a new official plan. This, of course, came after years and years of public consultation and technical review. The new

official plan had to have provincial approval, and, indeed, that approval was given by the province in 2010.

Of course, there were developers out there who had an ace up their sleeve: the OMB. These developers didn't think they should jump onto the intensification bandwagon when there were a whole lot of open fields and green spaces out there, ripe for new homes and Walmarts. So they appealed, and they won. They won. That victory, in my mind, was the death knell for the Ontario Municipal Board. From that decision on, that institution was all but dead from the neck down.

The developers appealed a plan that was 10 years in the making, that had been dissected by dozens of people at open and public meetings, that had been approved by the local politicians and had received the official stamp of approval from the provincial government because it had followed all the rules, all the new guidelines, right down to the letter of the law as laid down by Queen's Park. This plan called on development to take place in areas which already had existing roads and sewers, access to a new rapid transit system, and, if need be, there would be 85 hectares set aside for future growth.

The developers said, "Uh-uh. We want to expand way beyond that. We demand the right to spread new development like manure onto arable farmland. The heck with 83 hectares; we demand more than 1,000 hectares for our growth purposes"—1,053, as a matter of fact.

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Ms. Campbell, a former vice-chair of the OMB, was blown away by this decision. She looked into it. She started with the provincial growth plan, and she wrote in the online Waterloo Region Record, in June 2015, "An elected government, reflecting the interests of the people of Ontario, has recognized that we cannot endlessly take up farmland and natural heritage resources to accommodate growth," and that the OMB, in hearing the developer's appeal, "was required to consider legislation, provincial public policy, regional policies and all evidence" presented in the case.

Her opinion is this: "I have read the decision to try to understand the basis for the decision, or the interplay of evidence, law and policy. Unfortunately, I cannot understand how the board reached its decision. There is no thorough review of the growth plan and all that went into it. The board's consideration of 'methodology' to determine the land budget can at best be described as opaque."

She goes on to say, "The municipal board was required to interpret the growth plan and apply it to the evidence. I cannot conclude that the board interpreted the growth plan as required by law."

Her world, the real world, like that for many of us, as she puts it, "includes seeing farmland, forests and wetlands disappearing daily. I want my real world to allow for sustainable development while at the same time guaranteeing that our farmers have land on which to grow our food." As she puts it, "I want my real world to provide opportunities for Ontarians' grandchildren to see trees and ponds and birds and wildlife without having to drive hundreds of kilometres."

I would hope we all would agree with that. I know down my way there has been a lengthy battle over development plans near the Ojibway nature preserve. The Coco Group has plans for a big-box development on lands at the rear of what used to be the Windsor Raceway property, but because of its proximity to the nature preserve, local environmentalists were fighting to protect the land and the endangered species which make that area their home—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Is that Jenny Coco?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Well, you would know all the good Liberals, all the good benefactors, all the good donors to the Liberal Party. Of course it's Jenny Coco.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Just wanted to make sure.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My good friend Jenny Coco.

By way of background, and in the interest of full disclosure, I was just into my first months as a city councillor when this issue came before us. The owner of the Windsor Raceway had severed part of his property. He needed money to keep the harness track going, so he sold off the practice track and some of the area which housed the barns. Coco proposed some big-box stores. What came to council was a decision of what would be best suited for the site: big-box or residential.

The planning experts all said big-box as it would have less impact on the water table and the environment. At the time, there was still a racing program, and I couldn't imagine, if we went with residential, how the new homeowners would tolerate my friend Marty Adler calling a 10-card evening program every 15 minutes or so.

As the planning advisory committee, our options were limited: big-box or residential. Local environmental wanted the lands saved and added to the Ojibway nature preserve, but it wasn't an option in front of us. No one said, "Here's the money. We'll buy it and protect it." The city didn't have the money. The city didn't own the land. So as a planning committee and as a council, we voted for the big-box proposal. That was 10 or 11 years ago.

There was a challenge to the OMB eventually, and hearings and petitions. The OMB decided this year to disregard the appeal and uphold the big-box proposal. So the Coco Group went after two of the environmentalists for damages. Speaker, we've dealt with so-called anti-SLAPP lawsuits in this House and, as you know, SLAPP stands for "strategic lawsuit against public participation." When launched, it is intended to censor, intimidate and silence critics by burdening them with the cost of a legal defence. Coco wanted these two women to pay \$750,000 plus interest for challenging the big-box proposal on environmental grounds.

What were the environmental grounds for the challenge, you may ask? Well, allow me to read from the wording of the petitions that I presented in this House on dozens of occasions, as have Ms. Gretzky, the member from Windsor West, and Mr. Natyshak, the member from Essex. The Ojibway property, as you may know, Speaker, is within Windsor West and borders the town of LaSalle which of course is in the riding of Essex.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ojibway Prairie Complex is a five-park system totalling 332 hectares. It represents half of the city of Windsor's remaining natural areas;

"Whereas Ojibway has 160 species at risk"—representing 20% of Ontario's and 32% of Canada's species at risk, it represents the world's most endangered ecosystem;

"Whereas over 4,000 species live on the site"—including more than 700 types of plants, of which 100 are rare and 70 are in the reserve; it also has more than 3,000 insects, 233 bird species with breeding evidence for 71 species, as well as 16 mammals;

"Whereas Ojibway Park and the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve (OPPNR) are two of the parks in the complex adjacent to the proposed development. These parks are: (1) designated as natural heritage, environmentally significant areas, and in the case of the OPPNR, a provincially significant wetland (PSW) and an area of natural and scientific interest (ANSI); (2) protect biodiversity by hosting" eight of Canada's endangered species and 12 threatened species;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To designate this land with provincial importance and prevent any development on or adjacent to this land, so that the land will be protected and so too will the 91 species at risk, including six endangered and 12 threatened species on schedule 1 of the Endangered Species Act."

That's what the environmental community was saying as a matter of protecting the environment against commercial creep by way of a bunch of big-box shopping outlets on the property adjacent to these sensitive areas.

As I've mentioned, the OMB appeal delayed the big-box proposal, so the Coco Group wanted \$750,000 plus interest. The OMB said Coco deserved something, so they awarded them costs against Nancy Pancheshan of \$4,500, and in the case of Anna Lynn Meloche, Coco was awarded \$6,500—\$11,000 in total as opposed to their demand of \$750,000 plus interest.

The OMB ruled that Coco didn't deserve more because it would have a direct and chilling impact on citizen participation in Planning Act matters—no kidding. A GoFundMe campaign was launched, donations poured in, the community rallied and the money was raised in a matter of weeks.

My commentary isn't all negative against the OMB. The process, yes, but for this ruling, although I don't think any money should be taken away from those fighting to save the planet, the environment, the Ojibway lands, at least the OMB didn't cave in in this case and give the developers everything they wanted by way of expenses as a penalty for challenging their proposal.

The Coco Group, as the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Mr. Leal, knows, is a fine company. They are a good employer. But on this issue they were clearly on the wrong side of public opinion.

Speaker, I know you've heard of the advocacy group Environmental Defence. They have some strong opinions

about this bill. For years, they've been calling for a more level playing field for citizen input at OMB hearings, especially those hearings dealing with environmental concerns. Instead of a land use appeals panel, Environmental Defence says that in cases dealing with environmental matters, all appeals should be sent directly to the already established Environmental Review Tribunal. They already have the rules and expertise tailor-made to hear cases involving the potential destruction of woodlots, wetlands, wildlife habitat, farmland, groundwater and endangered species.

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When it comes to the cost of the hearings, they highlight the extraordinary imbalance on resources that developers hold over cottagers, ratepayers, environmentalists, aboriginal communities and anyone else seeking status at these appeal hearings. It's pointed out that developers can easily spend hundreds of thousands of dollars, even millions, and it gets written off as a business expense.

Interjections.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'm not interrupting you guys, am I?

Interjection: Not yet.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I don't want to interrupt. Carry on.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Order.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: But those amounts represent a crushing blow to most of us here in Ontario. They have an idea to correct that imbalance, Speaker. Since tens of billions of dollars are collected every year in Ontario through development fees, just designate a small percentage of those fees to an isolated fund which could subsidize the cost of those hearings.

A few moments ago, I told you about the fight between the Coco Group and a couple of women fighting to save the environment down in my area, near the Ojibway nature preserve. Costs were awarded against them to the tune of \$12,000, a far cry from the \$750,000 the Coco Group was looking for. Compare that to an OMB case in North Dumfries. The developer went after a citizens group for \$220,000. They were awarded \$110,000. In Vaughan, a farm family went to the OMB seeking a 30-metre buffer for their livestock operation. The developer spent \$1.5 million opposing their request. They went after the farmer for \$1.3 million. They were awarded 6% of that, or \$85,000, but that is under appeal because the developer did not produce any real evidence of what, if any, costs were actually incurred. Environmental Defence says that that has all the hallmarks of a SLAPP suit designed to silence dissent and discourage further public participation.

Speaker, even the cost of appealing such an outrageous award is prohibitive and could cost almost as much as the OMB hearing itself. Environmental Defence recommends limits be placed on such awards: \$1,000 for a one-day hearing, and \$5,000 for any hearing lasting longer than a day.

And forget about the proposed mediation aspect of this new bill, the environmentalists say. Mediation is a

favourite tactic of developers seeking to bleed poorly funded opponents, who often exhaust the entire hearing budget on costly and fruitless mediation. Environmental Defence says that mediation could be offered as an option, but it shouldn't be mandatory. If groups do choose that route, intervenor funding should be extended to ratepayer groups that agree to participate.

There is also a suggestion that the members of local planning appeal tribunals upgrade their credentials. All members should be required to have a professional education or qualification in land use planning policy and urban design. There's also a need for a formal complaints process to stop members from going after citizens groups for perceived slights or justifiable criticisms.

Speaker, just one more of these recommendations, and that's to require that all of these appeal hearings be video-recorded and featured on the tribunal's website. After all, even the Supreme Court of Canada now allows cameras to record and broadcast proceedings. One of the reasons for this suggestion is the huge cost of acquiring transcripts from the hearing. The OMB—are you ready for this?—used to charge nearly \$5 a page: \$4.90. Add \$1 if it was an expedited request. Give me a break. That might work out in having to pay \$1,500 for a transcript of a typical five-hour hearing. It would cost more than \$200,000 for a lengthy hearing, such as the one that took 139 hearing days to decide the fate of Walker Aggregates. Any relation, member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound? Any relation to Walker Aggregates?

Speaker, it has been difficult to find favourable published articles about the Ontario Municipal Board. We can speculate on the reasons for that, but some of the language used to describe the OMB has been very descriptive.

For example, from the *Globe and Mail* of February 2016, Marcus Gee writes about this mighty enemy doing battle with a city councillor in Toronto. He says, "For city councillors and neighbourhood groups, the Ontario Municipal Board is the meanest ogre in the kingdom, a half-blind beast whose arbitrary decisions impose looming condominium towers on pleasant neighbourhoods." Mr. Gee tells of pamphlets being circulated at town hall meetings with the blazing headlines, "Free Toronto from the OMB!" and "Stop inappropriate development!" One woman is quoted as saying, "Why are developers entitled to make millions of dollars while we suffer in the shadow of their giant projects?"

I said it has been hard to find favorable comments, but they are out there if you look hard enough. Our new housing minister, for example, or my friend Mr. Milczyn, a former councillor in Toronto, is quoted, when this article was written, as an MPP, not as a minister, and says the OMB takes the politics out of planning and judges a case on its facts.

"It tempers bad decision-making on the part of councils," he said. "Besides, city hall's record at the OMB is not as bad as people think. It wins slightly more cases than it loses," adding that a lot of the cases it loses are those where politics have eclipsed common sense.

Obviously, the new minister is at odds with the majority of his former colleagues on Toronto city council, who voted by a large margin to get rid of it. And lo and behold, that's what the Liberal government is, by way of this bill, actually doing at this point.

Speaker, when the Minister of Municipal Affairs introduced the Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act, he said, "The Ontario we build today will determine the communities that we will live in tomorrow and for years to come." He spoke of the advance work that has gone into the bill, of listening to people, and he said, "We heard stories of citizens having to spend their personal savings just to pursue an OMB appeal." He mentioned the city of Toronto and pointed out that about two thirds of all planning matters that Toronto had in front of the OMB could have been better dealt with at a local appeal body.

Minister McGarry, the Minister of Natural Resources, spoke to the bill, and is in Hansard as saying, "You can't open a media outlet without recognizing an article on climate change or flooding in recent days." How true, Speaker.

I know, just as a quick aside, that I had a question for Mr. Mauro about municipal flooding. He didn't hold out much hope that many of the people whose homes were flooded would actually qualify for that disaster relief program when the sewers backed up. We keep reminding them they've got to do more—they have to do more—for the people in Windsor and other parts of the province when this happens. Our municipalities have been spending millions of dollars in upgrading the sewer system, but we need help from the province and we need help from the federal government. This is not a substitute for private insurance; we get that. Private insurance is becoming harder and harder to get these days because of the repeat claims put into the insurance industry.

I want to thank you, Speaker, for your indulgence this afternoon and for listening. Thank you so much.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I did listen to the well-presented and well-researched hour-long presentation from the member from Windsor-Tecumseh. He canvassed quite a few different areas, and I only have two minutes. It would obviously take 10 minutes to respond. But anyway, I will just say a few points.

He mentioned one of his former colleagues, Rosario Marchese. He was a staunch opponent of the OMB for various reasons. I like what the member quoted here, that it's a fourth branch of government: unaccountable, unelected members.

Speaking as a city councillor for 15 years, first for Scarborough and then the city of Toronto, the OMB was very frustrating, because we would make decisions and we wouldn't know what the final decision would be until it went to the OMB. More often than not, they would have a special stamp on a building or on whatever structure we were debating or trying to approve or not approve, and it would say, "Approved by the OMB." It was very frustrating.

Like Rosario Marchese, we'd get frustrated too. In fact, I took a group of people to the OMB as a city councillor and I was threatened by the OMB person, saying, "You better be careful, councillor. You may have to pay the costs of a lawyer who represents the developer here." So that's a different issue right there.

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One thing I do want to mention, too, is that we are setting up, under the new bill, a new tribunal. The local planning appeal support centre will help out residents, as well, because it is frustrating, as Rosario Marchese mentioned and as the member mentioned here. The member mentioned the Spadina expressway and how the province stopped that.

My time is almost finished, but we are preparing a Local Planning Appeal Support Centre to help residents deal with this and navigate this whole system.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorne Coe: The region of Durham's council, on which I served for several years, as well as the conservation authority, made a submission to the government on Bill 139. In particular, they asked and suggested that the government provide more details in a timeline for the Ontario Municipal Board's transition to the proposed Local Planning Appeal Tribunal, in addition to further explanation on how this would impact the existing Ontario Municipal Board's appeal process.

They also asked to give municipal councils enough details on provincial plans and policies that would allow the councils to ensure that their local master plans—and this is really important—adhere to the provincial plan and to ensure that the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal would be able to utilize the policy framework for guidance and resolution of specific issues currently under appeal.

Additionally, the region of Durham's council made a request to the government that proposed programs which were beyond the core functions of conservation authorities should seek and require approval—this is the key distinction—from all partners on a given funding project, but particularly municipalities, and that the government should commit to ensuring the long-term sustainability of conservation authorities. The members of this chamber who have served on conservation boards will appreciate this, particularly the implementation of expanded provincial policies and programs through predictable funding, and also, lastly—I'm running out of time—establishing a transparent, province-wide and consistent financial reporting process.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments? I recognize the member from Toronto—Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, thank you. I appreciate the opportunity. I want to thank the member from Windsor—Tecumseh for his very thorough review of the bill before us and his ability to shine light on the problems that we see in this bill.

Speaker, as you are well aware, in Toronto—Danforth there has been a lot of development over the years. I have

to say that most recently I was approached by a family on Jones Avenue in my riding, living beside the site of the former St. Clement's church.

This family—multigenerational, Chinese—had been very concerned about a multi-storey condo complex to be built right beside their home. They had gone to the public meetings. They had seen the city of Toronto's planning report. They knew the city of Toronto had rejected the complex as designed because it was too big, because it didn't protect the privacy rights of the homeowners immediately beside it and those further down.

They came to my office about two weeks ago, because unknown to them—they weren't familiar with all these issues—the builder had completely ignored the city of Toronto, had gone straight to the OMB and had been able to put in place approval for all the features that the city of Toronto planning department said were problematic with this complex. The family, particularly the elderly members of the family, were completely distraught by the impact on their home.

There is no doubt that the OMB has to be radically reformed, if not abolished. It is not clear from what's before us that the government is actually going to bring in a solution that will address this kind of injustice. It's not clear, frankly, whether this bill will actually be proclaimed before the next election, notwithstanding whether it's good or bad, to address the problems that people are fighting with today.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Han Dong: I'm very pleased to be able to comment on the presentation given by my good friend the member from Windsor—Tecumseh. As the member for a riding that has seen unprecedented growth in the last 15 years, you can see how this bill is so important to me.

I remember when I first got elected, I had quite a few meetings with the local residents and activists, talking about the OMB issue as well as my predecessor Rosario's private member's bill to free Toronto from the OMB. My question at the time was, "Well, then what?" How would they appeal those decisions made by city council? You have to take them to court, which you can see would be more costly.

I was very pleased in 2016 that the Attorney General began a review of the OMB, and that led to 1,100 written submissions, and I think 700 people participated in 12 town halls. I remember being at one of the town halls, and I heard people talking about more community involvement in the process.

I just want to quickly point out the affordable aspect. The new legislation, if passed, will eliminate the lengthy and costly de novo hearing from the majority of land use planning appeals and create a Local Planning Appeal Support Centre to support citizens who want to participate in the appeal process. As well, it's exempting major land use planning decisions from appeal, like major official plan updates, and establishing a mandatory case conference for complex hearings to encourage early settlement.

I think the bill is well constructed, but I look forward to more debate and perhaps amendments in the—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. I return to the member from Windsor—Tecumseh to wrap up.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Indeed, it's been a long afternoon. I do wish to thank those members who took the time to listen and to comment on this bill: the members from Scarborough Southwest, Whitby—Oshawa, Toronto—Danforth and Trinity—Spadina.

When it comes to the OMB, I suppose it's like Donald Trump: You either like him or you hate him. There's little in between here, you know? There are communities that have been burned by the OMB and they've been arguing for years to abolish it, and there are developers who have had their way at the OMB and they think it's the best thing since sliced bread.

This bill abolishes the OMB and replaces it with another system—we hope a much more democratic system, because the OMB members were never elected. They might have been elected in the past, but they weren't elected to be on the OMB and held accountable by the people who elected them. This new system will force anybody on that tribunal to look at the decision-making of elected representatives, and if they followed all the rules, if they followed all their policies, if they followed the provincial policies, then their decision stands. The OMB can't overrule a local, elected decision that was made by following the rules.

That's what has been needed in Ontario for a long, long time. That's something we can all appreciate, because I think we all should live by the rules. We shouldn't be able to go out and hire the best lawyers to fight a small group of tenants or ratepayers or neighbours next to a church in Toronto—Danforth, just go to the OMB and ignore the local elected representatives in the city of Toronto. That should not be happening in this day and age.

This bill will correct a lot of that that's gone on in the past. I look forward to further debate on it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

I recognize the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Madam Chair, we wish debate to continue.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: I always welcome this opportunity on Thursday afternoons to talk about areas of common interest and concern—the private members' hour, of course, being a highlight of today's proceedings. But I'm pleased to stand in my place today, Speaker, and talk about the work being done on conservation author-

ties, something I was proud to initiate when I was parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, prior to my current position.

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I asked the Premier if we could look at the Conservation Authorities Act. You may wonder why that is. Well, as the House will know, I'm the MPP for Burlington, and in 2014 my community had an extraordinary flooding event. We had over 200 millimetres of water in about five hours, and consequently we had an overwhelmed sewer system in Burlington. Our water treatment plant was overwhelmed, and we had about 3,000 homes flooded. It brought into sharp relief for me on a number of fronts precisely why the role of our conservation authorities is so important.

But as I began to navigate that conversation and talk to our conservation authority—

Interjection.

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: Sorry, Madam Speaker. I meant to mention that I'll be sharing my time with the member for Beaches—East York.

It became absolutely clear to me that we needed to have this conversation on a broader basis. So I met with our Halton Region Conservation Authority—one of the finest in the province, I'm proud to say—and really spoke to them about this, and realized that the legislation governing conservation authorities had not been updated in over 20 years. Given the fact that climate change is here and adaptation is such an important part, certainly, of our government's response to climate change, and since municipalities want better tools, and given the effectiveness of climate change, and the role they play in watershed management and water source protection, it became very clear to me that we needed to initiate a review.

Again, I was happy to do that as parliamentary assistant, and today I'm proud to stand in my place and talk about this important legislation governing conservation authorities. Members of this House, many of us, have conservation authorities in our ridings, and consequently realize just exactly why they are so important.

As I began to initiate the review, do the stakeholder conversations and round tables, and meet with Conservation Ontario, we pulled together quite a large section of the stakeholder group, Madam Speaker. It had in it people who you might expect: the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, various municipal leaders, conservation authorities themselves—we got a broad cross-section from across the province. We absolutely had the development industry there. We began to unpack and examine what the issues were that mattered to them. I'm happy to say that sometimes in these circumstances you can have differences of opinion, and there was certainly that, but predominantly there was a broad cross-section of common interest and concern about how the role of conservation authorities needed to be clarified and modernized. There needed to be a better sense of the role that they play, so that there wasn't duplication of effort and so that municipalities, in particular, had a comfort level that they

were doing what they should be doing, and so on and so forth.

Again, guided by our own experience in Burlington and what I saw in the intervening period after the flood in my own community, it really led to that review. So now we have before us legislation that seeks a modernized policy framework, legislation of which I'm very proud, and an opportunity to really, again, modernize the legislation.

Speaker, like so many pieces of legislation that we talk about in this House, this is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Conservation authorities in different parts of the province have different roles, they have different responsibilities and they are responsible for watersheds of different sizes. Consequently, we need to give them the tools that they need to be effective in their corner of the world.

I'm proud to have had as part of my role conversations with conservation authorities about how they could gain efficiencies by working together. That's really important, because when you have two small conservation authorities, they maybe don't need to duplicate some of the back shop, for example, and they can share competencies and work together. If we give them that opportunity through legislative reform and give them the chance to work together in a more collaborative way, they can save resources. That helps the tax roll in the local municipalities, some of which are small and in rural areas, and they welcome that. Again, some very positive outcomes are coming to the surface as a consequence of this important conversation that we're having.

I mentioned the importance of increased clarity and consistency. That's very much a flavour of what this legislation seeks to do. I know that during the review, from speaking to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry—and certainly, this was part of the conversations that I had—there was that desire for clarification. This proposal would clarify the objectives of conservation authorities, and the programs and services that they provide.

We're looking at a few important features, Speaker, and I'll just elaborate on a couple.

Flood hazard mapping and technical guidance is critically important. Around the world, we're seeing tragedies and weather events that are extraordinary. We saw Hurricane Irma; we saw Hurricane Harvey. I don't mind sharing with the House that I was in Florida just before Hurricane Irma hit. I flew out the day before the evacuation started. It was eminently clear to me, where I was in Key West, 12 feet above sea level, that a number of those homes were going to be significantly damaged, and that would appear to be the case. We saw what happened with Harvey.

Not to point fingers, Madam Speaker, but talking positively about the instruments that we have, we have conservation authorities that assist us with watershed management, with source water protection—such very valued and important roles—and with flood plain mapping. This construct that we're talking about today

will give them added resources, from the perspective of technical guidance, and that's really important.

When you look at a place like Houston—again, not wanting to point fingers, but they didn't have those kinds of zoning controls in place, and that has been widely acknowledged. When you have conservation authorities there, they can assist with that activity. They can ensure that the kind of development that takes place is responsible and appropriate, particularly given these significant weather events.

These new regulations would be developed in consultation with the municipalities that we serve—the municipal sector, our very important partner—so we can achieve that proper balance.

Another feature of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry that I discovered while I was PA was that delicate balance—

Hon. Jeff Leal: You did the review.

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: I did the review, indeed.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Great job, by the way.

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: Thank you very much.

I worked with conservation authorities in Peterborough. We did that.

You think again about the role that conservation authorities play and how lucky we are to have them.

I'll use another example in the United States: Hurricane Sandy, which hit the New Jersey Shore and New York City so powerfully. There were developments there, now broadly acknowledged, that maybe shouldn't have been there.

We need that guidance at the local level, helping us to discern where developments should be, and where they shouldn't, in order to protect homes and other important heritage buildings from being damaged by these dramatic flooding events. Having assistance in flood plain mapping and management is a critical role that we can play in co-operation and in partnership with our conservation authorities.

That clarification of responsibility was a predominant theme in our negotiations, from the perspective of municipalities, from the perspective of the development industry and from the perspective of the conservation authorities themselves. They want clarity too. They want everybody to understand precisely what they're responsible for.

Another important part of that review was the consumer angle. I'll close on this final thought, and then the member for Beaches—East York is going to take the floor, Madam Speaker. Getting this right, from the perspective of consumers and their interaction with conservation authorities, is critically important.

Thank you, Speaker, for my time today. This is such an important piece of legislation. I hope that all members of the House will support it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. I recognize the member from Beaches—East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I want to commend the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport for that absolutely excellent review of the Conservation Authorities Act sections of

this bill, and for the great work she did as the PA to the minister in putting together the consultation process, which I know was extraordinarily extensive and was well received by the stakeholders out there.

I want to talk more on the OMB sections of the act.

This is a very, very important milestone in my three-year career here at the Legislature because, for me, bringing forward this bill is a campaign promise fulfilled. When I was knocking on doors in 2014, one of the most important issues in the south end of my riding—I am Beaches—East York, and in the Beaches issue, the Beaches part, they were concerned about the OMB. So it became a significant campaign promise that before the end of our first term, we would bring in the rules and regulations.

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My neighbours have a lot of concerns about the way the OMB is running. The member for Toronto—Danforth spoke exactly about the kind of response I've had. We've had numerous neighbourhood associations—I've grown up in the neighbourhood—primarily to fight development that they thought was inappropriate for the neighbourhood.

There were so many neighbourhood associations that they got together and created the Greater Beach Neighbourhood Association. It's important to recognize that that amalgamation represented all these little local associations, like the Toronto Beach East Residents Association, the Beach Triangle Residents Association, Friends of Glen Davis Ravine, Kew Beach Neighbourhood Association, Eastern Beach Community Association, the Balmy Beach community association, Beach Waterfront Community Association, Norwood Park community association and the Beach Hill Neighbourhood Association as well as the Beach Lakefront Neighbourhood Association. All of these associations gathered because they wanted to protect the neighbourhood and they saw the OMB as a threat. There is the concern.

I've had the pleasure—and I say that sarcastically—of being at the OMB, fighting a development myself. You all know that I have a pecuniary interest in a fashionable downtown establishment—I won't give you the name because I wouldn't want anyone to think that I was self-promoting. We had a development going up across the street from our small little bar that was going up with six storeys of above-ground parking because it's on top of a subway station. You couldn't dig down to park, so they put the parking—we would have been facing a brick wall of parking. It was not the kind of environment where you want to go sit on a patio and look at a brick wall, when currently we have a beautiful view of the south, going down to Lake Ontario.

We took them to the OMB, and it fell upon me as a partner to organize and manage that whole process. My heavens, what an extraordinary process it is. The money we had to spend in lawyers, in planners, in transportation engineers, to effect change to this development, to make it a development that was better suited to the neighbourhood, was extreme, but we did it, and we got major

concessions from the developer at the time. It was wonderful.

We believe that you need to continue to have the OMB. The reality is, the simplistic solution of Rosario's bill and the NDP position to just abolish—the simple solution—doesn't work. I remember in the House, when we first started to talk about OMB reform, the member for Oxford saying, "We wanted to abolish it; they wanted to keep it." They ran across these problems repeatedly with local councils, that they needed a reprieve from a local council decision and they needed the OMB.

The trick now is that we will have appeals to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal of the big pieces of the plans, but once you have a municipal plan in place, you need to take any concerns you have to a local appeals body, which will be respecting the decisions that were made by the people of that community. That's absolutely important that we do it.

This is why this bill is important and we need it to be moved forward, and I hope we'll get all-member support for it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorne Coe: One of the central components of Bill 139 is that it seeks to introduce new official plan policies to the Planning Act that guides all planning here in Ontario. These new policies would align with separate, new policies in Ontario's growth plan and would require all municipalities to include them in their official plan. In many cases, municipalities in Ontario have just completed their official plans after a five-year process. They have to include climate change policies in the official plan and may include policies that identify the area surrounding and including an existing or planned higher-order transit station or stop as a protected major transit station area.

Provincial plans generally use purposefully broad language and directions in conjunction with other provincial planning policy statements. However, there have been substantial changes made to provincial plans through other recent coordinated provincial land uses.

Given that the test for the success or failure of an appeal under the new regime will be based and judged on how the case conforms to provincial plans and, by extension, municipal plans—the official plans they just referred to—I believe that much greater definition in the details and guidelines is necessary to distinguish what constitutes conformity to a provincial plan. For example, there is a significant lack, at present, within the legislation of detailed guidelines for the measurement and achievement of density targets and major transit station areas.

I know I'm running out of time again, so thank you very much, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I listened intently to the government's contribution. Let me start off with the member from Beaches—East York, who said that when he was

knocking on doors in the last election, he heard a lot about the OMB. Well, the Liberal government waited too long to act on this file. After repeatedly promising OMB reform for more than 14 years—not four, 14 years—there are no assurances that the government can get the OMB reform done before the next election. We've got more than 70 bills in front of us. We've got a lot of work to do. Let's not just take for granted that this is going to happen overnight.

I'd like to spend the rest of my time complimenting the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport for her contributions to the conservation authority aspect of this bill. The minister, who's from Burlington, is also from Windsor; she grew up in Windsor. She has been an active player in the conservation authorities since she's been here from her former role as the parliamentary assistant.

I know people in the conservation authority world. I talk to them, and they tell me she was the best representative that this government has had on that file in the last 20 years. I wouldn't say that if it wasn't true. She did an excellent job on the review. Her work is in this report. I look forward to supporting the many changes in the conservation authority provisions in the bill. Some I have problems with, such as having expertise with no ability to track back to the funding partner, because you can't make decisions that are going to make your funding partner not be able to put up the cash. Thank you for the opportunity, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I listened carefully to the presentations by both the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport and the member from Beaches–East York. The first half of the discussion was about conserving watersheds. I can just talk about experiences that I have had in the past, and I think we'll pass this bill. I know the previous member said that there were 14 years where we haven't done anything, but we're going to pass this bill. I'm pretty sure about that.

All I can say about it is that we are strengthening accountability, clarifying responsibilities and updating funding mechanisms for the conservation authority—

Interjections.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I can't see the Speaker. Thank you. Now I can see the Speaker. Thank you very much.

The conservation authority is a very important body because, like the OMB, it can make decisions without the input of council. We're going to take that back and put people in charge who are accountable and who will be able to interplay with the community—same with the OMB. We're replacing that with the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal. These are people who we'll be able to interact with. We want to ensure that individuals and parties without legal representation find it easy to get involved and stay involved in local land use planning, including appeals.

The OMB has been like a black hole. You can look at it, but you can't see what's inside. This new change will make it much easier for people to understand the planning process and be able to participate in it, and they will have help, actually, from the government when they go in front of this tribunal, so they understand what's going on.

They're great improvements. Both parts of this bill are great improvements, and I'm glad our government has put them forward. The other parties never made the changes; we are.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: I want to just start off: Earlier, when I made my comment, I actually had a bit of a hesitation. I couldn't think of the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority. It's in Huron–Bruce and serves the area also represented by my colleague Lisa Thompson. I want to get both back on the record. Both of them serve our areas and they do a great job.

Madam Speaker, it's interesting. Right now I have an issue happening in the northern Bruce Peninsula. I'm receiving lots of calls and emails from residents who are worried about their community being turned into a flood plain. It's about zoning and bylaws, very appropriate for this type of legislation. What's prompting these concerns is the municipality's proposed zoning bylaw changes in the official plan, which are being put in place to satisfy the 2014 provincial policy statement. Similar to how the recently proposed NEC expansion review played out in my riding, this one too is causing quite a lot of discontent. Namely, there was no economic impact analysis of the changes, and people fear the proposed changes, namely the new environmental hazard lines and how they will have a devastating potential financial and personal impact on the value of their land, their homes, use of their private properties, insurance, taxes, those types of things.

There's a meeting that's going to be held on September 25, which regrettably I can't attend because I'll be here doing my duty at Queen's Park. But the key here is—and I can't stress it enough—how important communication is, that people understand. Again, I've talked in this bill about the reality of when you bring out proposed legislative changes and people don't have all the answers, and you can't answer those questions, then people get very concerned—a lot of anxiety, a lot of stress in the community—and ratepayers start to worry: "What's this impact going to be on me?"

In this case, I'd suggest that with this legislation some people like that the OMB is going to be easier to access and not have as much power; others aren't. But there are still lots of unanswered questions, and the one I go back to again is that the provincial government needs to actually step up. They only pay 10%. There's lots of infrastructure. All of the dams alone that need to be replaced across our conservation authorities—if they want more say, they're going to have to pay.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member from Beaches East–York to wrap up.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It's a great pleasure for me to thank the member for Whitby–Oshawa for his comments. As a city councillor, I know he dealt with the difficult balance all the time between developer dollars, developer interests and the community interest. Now they can have all that control at the local planning level. I'm sure he's delighted for that, for his communities.

To the member for Windsor–Tecumseh: Too late. We're only a government of three years since I've been here, and one year before that since our leader became the leader. Four years in, here we have settled. We have actually made significant movement on a very, very difficult file.

I appreciate my colleague the member from Scarborough Southwest. He's in the area just to the east of me. We share a border of Victoria Park. I delight every time I have to move into his community and see the great work he does. Thank you very much for your kind comments.

Finally, the great member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound: He mentions the Saugeen conservation authority. I've got to tell you—

Mr. Bill Walker: You like the fish there.

Mr. Arthur Potts: —I love the fish there. We've got muskie, we've got steelhead. I get up there as often as I can.

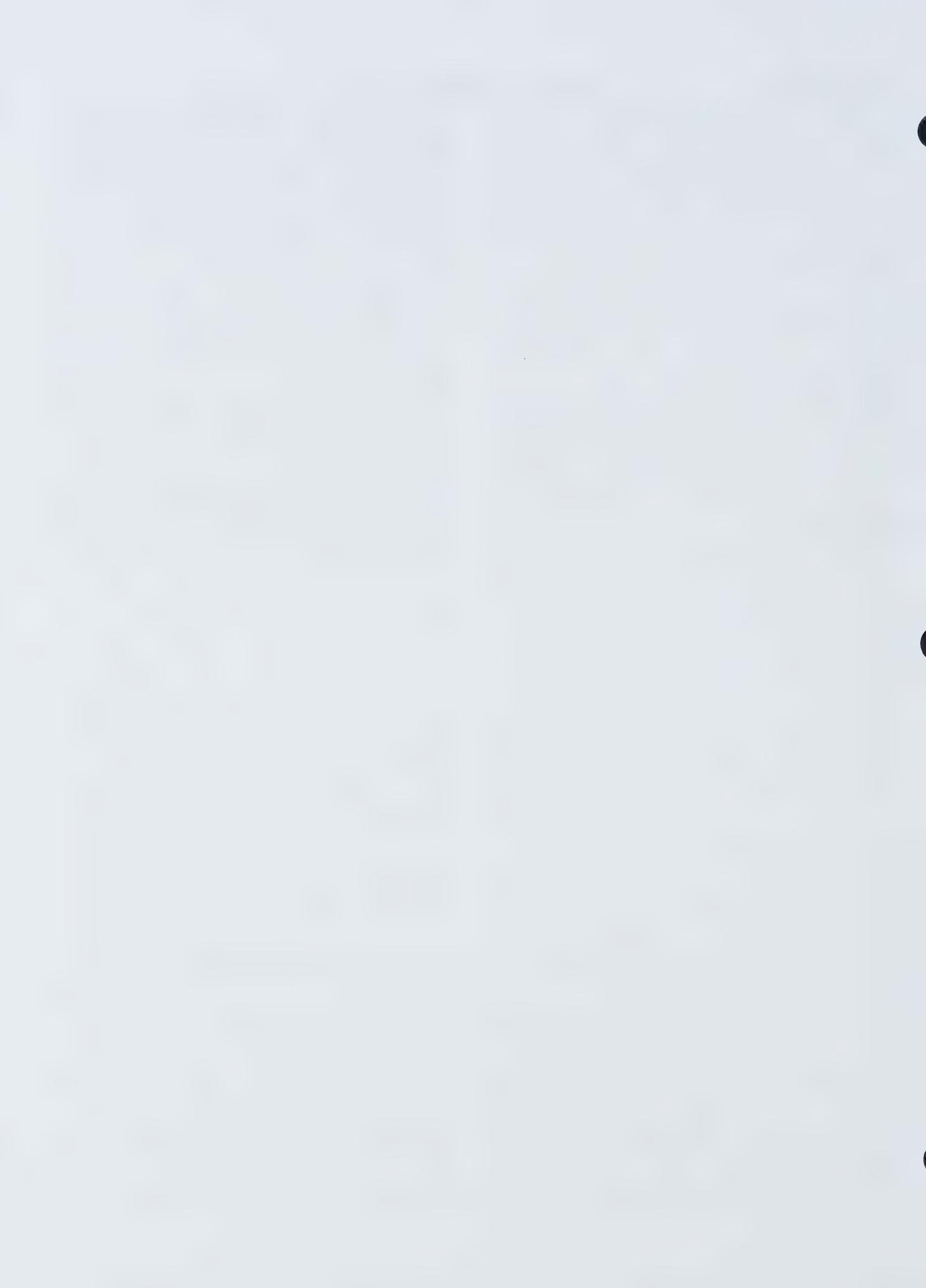
The conservation authority—and I didn't have a chance to speak to it in my initial remarks, and the minister did. The incredible work they do—it's not just flood plain controls, it's not just infrastructure, it's the whole tourism aspect, that we bring people from all over Ontario to come into these conservation areas. We have protected watersheds. We are working with farmers. We're working with communities to ensure that those waters are clear and pristine and that the dams are not stopping wildlife from moving up the rivers; that we're keeping fertilizer and phosphorus from spilling into the watersheds and that the winter spreading is not causing algae blooms in our lakes.

We know the great work of the conservation authorities. This bill, as the member from Windsor–Tecumseh talks about, is going to dramatically improve the oversight of these organizations.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Seeing it is after 6 p.m., this House stands adjourned until 10:30 a.m. on Monday, September 25, 2017.

The House adjourned at 1804.



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Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research, Innovation and Science / Ministre de la Recherche, de l'Innovation et des Sciences
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Naidoo-Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Indira (LIB)	Halton	Minister of the Status of Women / Ministre de la condition féminine Minister Responsible for Early Years and Child Care / Ministre responsable de la Petite enfance et de la Garde d'enfants Attorney General / Procureur général Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint de parti reconnu
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Hon. / L'hon. Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)		Premier / Première ministre
Vacant	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation / Ministre des Relations avec les Autochtones et de la Réconciliation
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cheri DiNovo
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Michael Mantha
Mike Colle, Nathalie Des Rosiers
Cheri DiNovo, Michael Harris
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Michael Mantha, Arthur Potts
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

Chair / Présidente: Ann Hoggarth
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Han Dong
Yvan Baker, Toby Barrett
Mike Colle, Han Dong
Victor Fedeli, Ann Hoggarth
Harinder Malhi, Cristina Martins
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Granville Anderson
Granville Anderson, Yvan Baker
Grant Crack, John Fraser
Lisa Gretzky, Julia Munro
Lou Rinaldi, Lisa M. Thompson
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przezdziecki

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Présidente: Cristina Martins
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Daiene Vernile
Granville Anderson, Lorenzo Berardinetti
James J. Bradley, Wayne Gates
Cristina Martins, Sam Oosterhoff
Randy Pettapiece, Shafiq Qaadri
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przezdziecki

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Nathalie Des Rosiers
Amrit Mangat, Jim McDonell
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Ross Romano, Monique Taylor
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Monte McNaughton
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Robert Bailey, James J. Bradley
Joe Dickson, Sophie Kiwala
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Monte McNaughton, Laurie Scott
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bob Delaney, Vic Dhillon
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Randy Hillier, Monte Kwinter
Lisa MacLeod
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Ted McMeekin
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lou Rinaldi
Granville Anderson, James J. Bradley
Grant Crack, Jennifer K. French
Jack MacLaren, Ted McMeekin
Lou Rinaldi, Mario Sergio
Daiene Vernile, Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Lorne Coe, Bob Delaney
Vic Dhillon, Joe Dickson
Harinder Malhi, Gila Martow
Ted McMeekin, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley